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## **EXPLORING THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT AND RETAIN AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE SOCIAL WORKERS**

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**Abstract.** This study surveyed (n = 69) individuals representing various positions within nonprofit organizations in the Los Angeles County area including San Fernando Valley in an effort to explore current recruitment and retention practices African American male social workers working for nonprofit organizations and foundations in the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles area. The study utilized qualitative methods to identify both gaps and best practices in recruiting and retaining African American male social workers in nonprofit organizations and foundations. The results indicated that while agencies recognize that there is a growing need for more diversity within nonprofits; none of the agencies reported the importance of increasing African American male social worker recruitment and retention efforts in nonprofits. In addition, recommendations will be included in the article for future implementation practices for nonprofit organizations and foundations in the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles area with the goal of increasing recruitment, retention and mentoring of African American male social workers.

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## Introduction

Over the past decade there has been a dearth in retaining people of color in the nonprofit sector (Alicia, 2017; Geidner, 2015; Hyde, 2012; Ostrower, 2007; Schwartz, 2011) specifically African American males. In a 2010 survey by CommonGood Careers of employees of nonprofits, more than a quarter of the respondents of color reported having left a job “due to lack of diversity and inclusiveness” (2011). Similarly, a 2014 report from A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities (ABFE), conducted various focus groups and interviews with Black professionals in philanthropy who found that when asked why African American/Black practitioners leave the field of grant writing, roughly one-fifth gave “being pushed out” of philanthropy as the reason for leaving, and two in five indicated that isolation was a cause for leaving foundation jobs (LM Strategies, 2014) Across the nonprofit sectors, working daily in racially hostile, isolating, and insensitive environments is taking a psychological and physical toll on nonprofit staff of color and resulting in a rise in staff turnover and recruitment challenges (Alicia, 2017; Schwartz, 2011). This is a predicament for the nonprofit sector, especially knowing that the needs to be diversifying its staff and leadership in order to better reach, reflect, and advocate for constituents and consumers who often are people of color.

Factors that influence African American/Black men’s access to information, resources, and mentoring relationships lends itself to better recruitment and retention practices that embrace a more culturally sensitive (Tillman, 2002), culturally relevant and responsive (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Landson-Billings, 2014), and culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) organization. Organizational milieu influences (i.e., perceptions of role requirements, culture, structure, context, expectations, and locus-of-control) leader-membership exchange, particularly when it comes to developing subordinates (Shivers-Blackwell, 2006). Existing models of leadership development preserve a social, cultural, and political homogeneity that minimizes opportunities for those outside the ‘in-group’ (Breland, Treadway, Duke, & Adams, 2007). Thus, the necessity of mentorship is an instinctively obvious concept, however, a scarcity of research specifically examining sociocultural nuances distinct to African American men inspires a deeper look at why and how African American men can better participate in the mentoring process with specific attention on the role of the nonprofit organization. We know that mentorship has demonstrated alleviation of anxiety and apprehension in the world of work (Zafar, Roberts, & Behar-Horenstein, 2012) while improving job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Behar-Horenstein, West-Olatunji, Moore, Houchen, & Roberts, 2012; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Ramaswami & Dreher, 2010). Mentoring is not only advantageous to the individual(s); it benefits mentors and organizations as well (Chandler et al., 2011; Ensher & Murphy, 2011). Conversely, the absence of mentorship practically assures that development, if any, will occur within silos (Behar-Horenstein et al., 2012; Benishek, Bieschke, Park, &

Slattery, 2004). The purpose of this research was to explore the current efforts to recruit, mentor and retain African American male social workers working for nonprofit organizations and foundations in the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles area.

## **Methodology**

### ***Participant Recruitment***

An online survey link was sent via email to the 300 nonprofit organizations who provide field instruction to CSUN social work graduate student interns (and who often hire CSUN MSW graduates). N = 69 people completed the survey from various agencies in the Los Angeles County and Greater Los Angeles area (San Fernando Valley). The survey link included a 16-item questionnaire instrument developed by the researcher. Data from the questionnaire enabled the researcher to correlate specific profile demographic variables with other study variables. The questionnaire was designed to collect the following data: age, gender, ethnicity, education level, name of agency/organization, position title, years spent in current position, describe recruitment efforts to employ African American male social workers, describe retention efforts made to retain and sustain African American male social work employees at your organization, and describe mentoring programs offered to African American male social workers (if yes, please specify whether it is a formal or an informal program).

### ***Data Analysis***

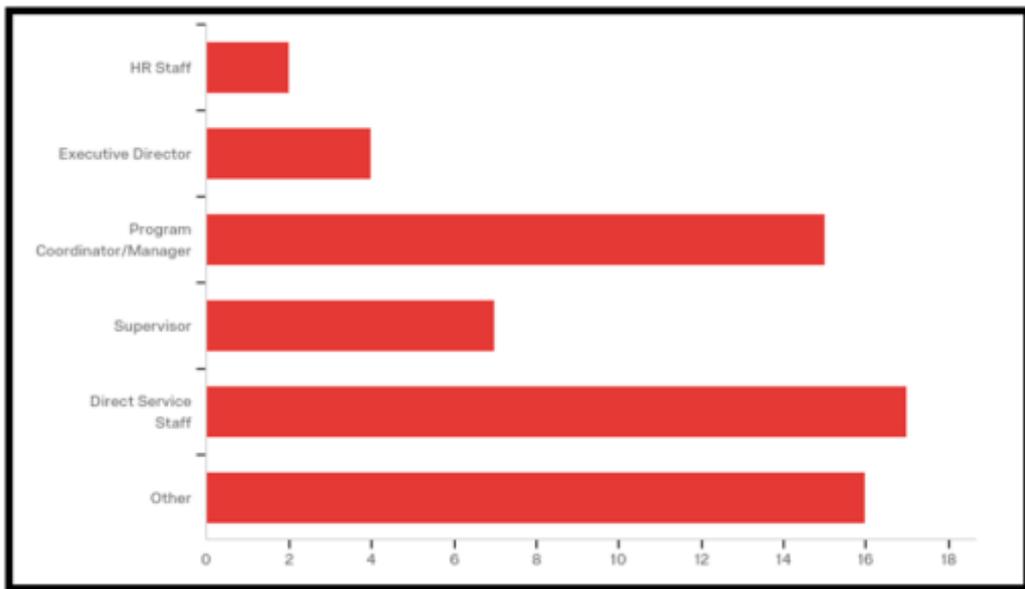
Descriptive analysis of demographic profile characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, age, educational level, years in position and position title). A thematic analysis was utilized to identify emergent themes from the three exploratory questions through open coding.

## **Results**

The ethnicity breakdown is as follows: Black/African American 26.67% (16 participants); White/Caucasian 31.67% (19 participants); Asian/Pacific Islander 5% (3 participants); Latinx 30% (18 participants); Native Americans/First Natives 0% (0 participants); Other 6.67% (4 participants and added text to include “White/Caucasian/Asian/Pacific Islander,” “Latina,” “Multiracial: Latinx Filipinx,” and “Romanian and El Salvadorian”). The gender breakdown was largely female, 70.49% (43 participants) and 29.51% (18 participants) identified as male participants. There were no participants that identified as gender nonconforming or other, but there were also some participants that did not make a selection. Service Planning Areas (SPA) that were represented in the survey responses include: Antelope Valley 7.94% (5 participants); San Fernando Valley 60.32% (38 participants); Metro 12.70% (8 Participants); West 9.52% (6 participants); South 3.17% (2 participants); East 1.59% (1 participant); South Bay 4.76% (3 participants). The current positions of the participants

were as follows (see table 1): HR Staff 3.28% (2 participants); Executive Director 6.56% (4 participants); Program Coordinator/Manager 24.59% (15 participants); Supervisor 11.48% (7 participants); Direct Service Staff 27.87% (17 participants); Other 26.23% (16 participants written response included, Supervisor/volunteer/event manager, outreach case manager, manager and supervisor, case manager, Special Ed teacher, Program Director, Director of Program and Services, Intake Coordinator, MSW Intern, Clinical Director, Volunteer Coordinator, Director, and MSW).

**Table 1: Current Positions of Participants**



### ***Emergent Themes***

The following are the themes that emerged related to the questions centered around recruitment, retention and mentoring through a diversity and inclusion lens. Along with each of the themes follows quotes from the participants who completed the survey. That being said, responses that were produced from the question: “Describe how your nonprofit organization/agency **RECRUITS** Black/African American males to work there?” had themes of, traditional recruiting, recruit to reflect the community served, and no recruitment for specific groups of people.

#### **1) Traditional recruiting:**

- Job resources- volunteer/internships
- Application and Interview
- HR recruits for us. We also use word of mouth
- Standard Application process

**2) Recruit to reflect the community served:**

- *Every site does something different. For Lancaster we try to identify potential candidates for our traineeship/internship program, or for our direct service staff. We make a concerted effort to have staff that reflects our population.*
- *Programs focused on Black father bring in the highest number of Black Male staff*

**3) No recruitment for specific groups of people:**

- *We don't recruit AA males specifically as anyone can apply*
- *We don't specifically recruit any gender or ethnicity. We are open and look for experience and willingness to work with seniors.*
- *We do not have a particular recruitment process for African American men. Our procedure is usually to post an ad on Facebook, Monster, Indeed and etc. and send a notice to all current employees to let them know that a new position is available. After that we interview individuals then the person we believe will best fit the position.*
- *We recruit the same across the board. We do not have a special recruiting system for Black/African American males*
- *No active recruitment. Job posting on website and Indeed.com*

**4) No recruitment and no diversity:**

- *I have no idea; our organization isn't as diverse.*
- *They don't actively recruit at my agency*

**5) Unaware of recruitment process:**

- *I do not know. Human Resources recruits new staff.*
- *I have no idea*
- *I do not know if there is a specific recruitment effort for Black Males.*

Responses that were produced from the question: “Describe how your nonprofit organization/agency **RETAINS** (i.e. efforts to keep) Black/African American males working there?” had themes of agencies having no mentorship, supervision/ one on one, and collaborative mentorship.

**1) No mentorship:**

- *We do not have any males*
- *We have not had any black males to mentor.*
- *There are currently no African American males within my current organization to mentor*
- *This is not part of the agency's strategic plan*
- *Not currently since the population we service is largely Euro-American or Hispanic, a sprinkling of Black*
- *The organization does not mentor Black Americans because they have not lived the Black Experience.*

- *I am not aware of any special effort, although the agency acknowledges that mentorship in general is lacking and is making it an organizational priority in coming years.*
- *Mentorship can be provided through a male supervisor. Currently all male supervisors are Caucasian.*

## **2 Supervision/one on one:**

- *Older black male staff mentor the younger, less experienced black male staff*
- *Team meetings and supervision*
- *As a director I try to mentor staff in general, trying to find out their interests and seeing how their career goals match the agency's mission. As a mentor I have frank conversations about what is the best setting for them and how we can help them grow professionally. Once again, we do not target one gender/or ethnicity due to HR mandates not to single out people for those reasons.*
- *Traditional supervision*
- *We do not have a specific mentor program but in my department, I am always available to speak with the staff and provide info that will help them in their personal and professional lives.*
- *In the volunteer program I will coach them as much as possible*

## **3) Collaborative mentorship:**

- *There is inter-team mentorship that takes place.*
- *Same opportunity regardless of race. Proactive management, training resources and workshops, general staff culture.*
- *We provide leadership opportunities across the nation*
- *The use of black/African American leaders and other individuals of color to support growth and upward mobility in the organization*

The written responses stating the agencies efforts to retain Black/African American males' workers coincide with the results produced in the question asking participants how many Black/African American males currently work at the nonprofit agency. Responses that were produced from the question: "*Do you feel like your nonprofit organization/agency is **DIVERSE**? Please describe how it is or not diverse.*" had themes of agencies being female dominated, attempt to be inclusive, limited diversity, and lacking diversity in higher up positions.

### **1) Female dominated agency:**

- *We have a diverse staff of 6-9 women of color and 1 Caucasian*
- *No, it's mostly female and Latinx*
- *We have majority women in the agency*
- *Yes. We have a wide range of races + religions. it is mostly female, so male employees of all races are fewer*

- *I feel it is. As a good social service agency we mainly see female applicants (many backgrounds) but we also have a good number of males.*
- *Yes, out of our small staff of about 12 we have those of Latino decent, Asian, Caucasian and African American. We just only have a few males.*

## **2) Attempts to be inclusive:**

- *yes, it is a diverse agency. males-females-LGBTQ-African American-Mexican American- Latina/o- Asian-Armenian/ middle Eastern*
- *Our agency is a diverse nonprofit agency that welcomes volunteers, staff, and community members regardless of their age, race, gender, income. We offer programs to support the diverse community we serve such as support groups for fathers, programs for youth, support services to grandparents and teaching activities for parents.*
- *Yes, we have a yearly conference EDGY- Educating Diversity of Gay and Lesbian Youth amongst all trainings work wholeheartedly at being culturally aware.*
- *It is very diverse. the main staff includes 3 of African descent 1 of Caucasian and 4 of Hispanic heritage. Our volunteers include Native American, Caucasian, African and Hispanic.*
- *Yes, we have employees of all different backgrounds. Our agency can make better efforts in hiring more black employee. We can also improve on recruiting more Black resource families.*
- *Yes, we have a diverse environment. We have Latino, Caucasian and African American individuals working in different roles throughout our organization. Yes, there is a lot of diversity in staff and management. Staff are from various ethnicities, socioeconomic status, gender identity, etc.*

## **3) Limited diversity:**

- *Not very diverse in terms of representing African Americans, middle Easter or even Afro Latinx people.*
- *No. We are primarily Latinx but need to make more of an effort at diversifying our staff and most importantly retaining our staff to sustain a diverse pool of individuals.*
- *It could be more diverse - leadership positions are mostly white*
- *It is not diverse. We are entrenched with a Hispanic population as clients and staff*
- *No. The agency is primarily Latinx and white, Christian, and non-queer. The majority of clients served are also Latinx, and there is a great match of cultural and language competence between the staff and that client group, but we are not well equipped to serve clients of other backgrounds.*

**4) Lacking diversity in higher up positions:**

- *Yes, and no. Our board is not diverse, mostly upper-class people of white descent. Our Executive Leadership Team is more reflective of our organization with our CEO being female white, CFO, Black female, CPO Latinx female, our Legal Counsel biracial female, HR EVP Asian descent, VP of Operations Asian, VP Finance Latinx, EVP SA 1,2, 4 Female, EVP SA 3, 6,7 Black Male. There is a strong push to have Peer Support at all levels and voice and choice context. In my site I strive to have a staff reflective of the AV population. In management we have me (Latinx), Asian, One biracial and two Caucasian women. Our staff is very diverse in ethnicity (black, Asian, Caucasian, Latinx) but we struggle with finding male therapists in general.*
- *Yeah, we have a good balance of all ethnicities as well as men and women overall. However, upper management is not diverse being primarily white female.*
- *The main staff and direct workers are mostly men and women of color. Management is a very high majority Caucasian and older women.*
- *No. All women, mainly white and Latinx (only because they need Spanish speakers)*
- *While many of the front-line staff are diverse the culture and the leadership of the agency is white and patriarchal*
- *No, mostly Latinx and whites in senior leadership. Very few Black people and very few Black clients*

Responses that were produced from the question: “Do you feel like your nonprofit organization/agency is **INCLUSIVE**? Please describe how it is or not inclusive” elicited responses such as, yes but, no efforts to be inclusive and successful inclusivity.

**1) Yes, but:**

- *Yes, however the agency could do a better job in marketing communities of color.*
- *It is inclusive of Latinx and LGBTQ folks but could do better engaging other communities of color*
- *Yes and no. I believe that there is not open conversation about economic disparities and class issues within our staff. WE have line staff and administrative staff that are on food stamps/Medi-Cal and that do not have a living wage. We should also have more client voice in decision-making/operations. Otherwise, I do feel that leadership is very inclusive and diverse.*
- *They are required by the county to be inclusive*
- *The effort is there but it's very surface. Specific departments like marketing and development are all white*

- *Somewhat - as previously mentioned, we have a racially diverse employee group, but it is mostly women. The agency does conduct annual trainings for both staff and interns, but more can be done to educate on cultural humility and sensitivity.*
- *It is inclusive at the bottom. Not very much at all at the top. Once management level is included it is almost exclusively white.*
- *It is trying to be but there are not enough people of color in senior leadership positions to successfully implement an inclusive culture*

## **2) No effort to be inclusive:**

- *No. At least in my department, there are consistent cultural problems of staff members feeling ostracized and leaving the organization quickly, and these are usually staff members with identities with minority identities.*
- *It is not. I have tried multiple avenues to create diversity with only a little change*
- *No, this is a huge area of improvement. Decisions are typically made by the same team of individuals.*
- *My Organization does not feel inclusive. Most of the daily operational decisions are made by Upper Management & does not include the Social Services staff working in the trenches.*
- *No, if you don't fit in to the culture, efforts are not made to make you feel included.*

## **3) Successful inclusivity:**

- *Yes, they include all people in everything and ensure clients and staff feel welcomed and safe.*
- *Very inclusive! From the top down our organization values inclusivity and weaves this value into all that we do.*
- *Yes. It is seen in our diversity even as a very small staff.*
- *Everyone is welcome. Very inclusive.*
- *Yes, as a social service provider, we do our best to extend these practices in employees.*

## **Discussion**

Meta-analysis study is trying to improve the consistent of statistics The results strongly suggested a need for nonprofit agencies and organizations alike in the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles area to increase recruitment and mentorship efforts of African American/Black male social workers in nonprofit organizations. While many organizations had diversity, they lacked in the area of inclusive practices as it relates to recruitment and mentorship of African American social workers in the organizations. The themes in the study indicated that organizations are not considering the specific

needs of recruitment for a particular demographic (i.e. African American males) at this time. Recruitment, retention and mentoring of African American males are necessary to improve and sustain diversity and equity within nonprofits, as well as develop, promote, retention and mentoring of men of color in the human services field. There is a growing need for African American men to work within the community to provide representation, modeling and trusting relationships with the various stakeholders. Many of the participating agencies reported that they would love to see more African American males in social work and clinical therapy within the nonprofit community mental health agencies. This would mitigate the over pathologizing and racializing behaviors and symptoms within the nonprofit mental health field. Some agencies indicated that they do have many female African American staff but no males. Some even reported that they wish they had more African American male case managers because they have some clients that would really benefit from a male influence.

An addition concern that was brought up several times from various agency representatives was looking at the problem of pay inequities within nonprofits therefore not making it lucrative for men of color specifically African American/Black men to want to work at nonprofits. Due to the lack of representation many agencies reported that there needs to be more emphasis on intersectionality at the agency throughout all tiers of the organization. The following are recommendations to consider when seeking to recruit, retain and mentor African American social workers in nonprofits.

1) It is important to note that considering the people you are servicing and have the staff you hire be a reflection of the community they are servicing. Consider providing a Black Male Excellence Stipend in addition to their annual salary.

2) Have open and honest conversations about antiracist practices around your recruitment, retention and mentoring efforts addressing and examining the current structure of the organization that maybe rooted in white supremacy and cis-gender heteronomy.

3) Have African American/Black males in positions of leaderships within the organization who can provide a different lens while not tokenizing those same people in leadership position.

4) Actively creating hiring committees that are diverse and has inclusion measures that the applicants/candidates must meet avoid hiring individuals that look and think like what has been historically been in place which does not allow for diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.

## **Conclusion**

It is expected that findings will inform nonprofit organization leadership about the necessity of training, supervising, supporting of African American/Black male social work employees related to recruitment, retention and mentoring. Findings will foster honest and uncomfortable conversations to bring out sustainable inclusion efforts. The

authors anticipate that these conversations will ignite action with the goal improving retention and recruitment outcomes related to African American male social workers within nonprofits in the Los Angeles County area. Furthermore, authors believe that will aid organizations and agencies with the nonprofit sector to incorporate recommendations in their policies and day to day operations practices.

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## ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ РОЛІ МЕНТОРСТВА В НЕКОМЕРЦІЙНИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЯХ З ПІДТРИМКИ І ЗБЕРЕЖЕННЯ АФРО-АМЕРИКАНСЬКИХ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ ПРАЦІВНИКІВ

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**Анотація.** Дослідження передбачало вивчення поточної практики набору й утримання афроамериканських соціальних працівників чоловічої статі, що працюють в некомерційних організаціях та фондах в Сан-Фернандо району Лос-Анджелеса. У дослідженні взяли участь ( $n = 69$ ) особи, які представляють різні посади в некомерційних організаціях в районі округу Лос-Анджелес, включаючи долину Сан-Фернандо. Респонденти отримали лінк на опитувальник, що містив 16 пунктів. Дані, отримані в результаті опитування, дозволили дослідникам співвіднести конкретні демографічні змінні профілю з іншими змінними дослідження. Для дослідження використовували якісні методи для виявлення як прогалин, так і найкращих практик щодо набору та утримання афроамериканських соціальних працівників чоловічої статі в некомерційних організаціях та фондах. Результати показали, що, хоча агенції визнають, що зростає потреба у більшій різноманітності в некомерційних організаціях; жодне з агентств не повідомило про важливість збільшення зусиль із набору та утримання афроамериканських чоловіків із числа соціальних працівників у некомерційних організаціях. Крім того, до статті долучені рекомендації для некомерційних організацій та фондів долини Сан-Фернандо району Лос-Анджелеса з метою збільшення набору, утримання та наставництва афроамериканських соціальних працівників чоловічої статі. Очікується, що таким чином відбудеться інформування керівництва некомерційних організацій про необхідність навчання, нагляду, підтримки та сталого включення чорношкірих чоловіків, що займаються соціальною роботою. Автори дослідження передбачають, що ці рекомендації допоможуть покращити результати залучення афроамериканських соціальних працівників чоловічої статі до роботи в некомерційних організаціях в окрузі Лос-Анджелес. Крім того, автори вважають, що це допоможе організаціям та установам, які працюють в некомерційному секторі, включати рекомендації у свою політику та повсякденну практику діяльності.

**Ключові слова:** афро-американські чоловіки; соціальна робота; некомерційні організації; наставник.