BLACK MALES MANAGING MANAGERS: THEIR UNIQUE DILEMMAS OF

MIDDLENESS

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ABSTRACT

This research had two basic objectives: (1) To shed light on the factors that contribute to attaining a middle management position (including facilitating circumstances and impediments); and (2) to uncover the experience of Black men once they attained such positions (supervisory experiences, and race relations). Data were collected from twenty-three managers employed at 20 distinct organizations (15 middle managers and 8 managers of others) using semi-structured interviews conducted by the author. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire detailing biographical and career information. The findings included information about developmental relationships, pressures of middle management, the impact of race and gender on dynamics with supervisors and direct reports, and the nature of intraracial relationships within organizational settings. The qualitative analysis revealed the benefits of developmental relationships across race and gender group memberships, the differences between interracial and intraracial relationships with subordinates, and the costs and benefits of an incongruent expressed racial identity. Implications for those who work for and consult to organizations and their employees are discussed in addition to suggestions for future research.

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CHAPTER I

EVOLUTION OF RACE RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES WORKPLACE

During a speech given in 1900, addressing the Pan-African Conference in

London, W.E. B. Du Bois first declared "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the

problem of the color-line" (Du Bois, 1903, p.3). At present, nine years into the 21st

century, the United States elected the first Black male president in the country's history.

Despite this achievement, the problem of the "color-line" persists. Black men have

continually reported encountering barriers to attaining their career goals and rising

through the management ranks within predominately White organizations (Davis &

Watson, 1985; Carver & Livers, 2003; Thomas & Garbarro, 1999).

With baby boomers leaving the workforce and racial demographics changing, the

composition of the country's workers was inevitably going to change as well. Preceding

this shift were changes made in the legal system and society. The 1960s brought

significant advances through the Civil Rights Movement and the introduction of

affirmative action. One of the consequences was an increase in the number of Black

people in management throughout the public and private sectors (Alderfer, 1992).

Affirmative action also placed White women in a new subgroup called "women and

minorities". These were the groups that the government felt had not been presented with an equal opportunity in the workplace.

There has been a small yet significant body of research dedicated to the experience of Black leaders within organizations (Collins, 1997; Dickens & Dickens, 1991; Livers & Carver, 2003). Additionally, many researchers have focused on Black managers as one group, combining men, women, and all levels of management. This has resulted in a void in the literature dedicated to the experience of Black male managers that have risen past the first level of management, but have not yet ascended to the executive level.

<div align="center">Adult Development and Black Racial Identity</div>

Being Black in organizations impacts adult development and racial identity development. Black people have developed coping mechanisms and styles of interaction that have allowed them to effectively respond to the race based challenges they face in predominately White settings (Davis & Watson, 1985). Their challenges include dealing with overt and covert forms of racism and living a bicultural life. These difficulties become more complex as Black people move into management positions, and the scope of responsibility significantly increases.

From 1968 through the early 1970's, Daniel Levinson conducted a study of 40 men between ages 35 and 45. Levinson collected data about the men's life history, current relationship and family status, and career. He proposed that over the course of a lifetime, adults pass through stages of both life and career development (Levinson, 1978). This is one of the early studies that link psychological adult development and career

objectives. Although five Black men participated in this study, the influence of race played a seemingly insignificant role in the development of Levinson's theory.

Herbert (1989) conducted a study of 10 Black men, ages 35-50, utilizing Levinson's research and interviewing techniques. His study showed that Levinson's adult development cycle was applicable to Black men; however, the Black men in his study did not have a "mentor" as defined by Levinson. Levinson (1978) described the mentor relationship as a multifaceted developmental relationship that forms while a man is approximately 20 to 30 years of age, and ending by the time he is 40. Mentors are typically 8 to 15 years older than their protégés. Levinson's definition of mentor was not widely adopted, and often times the term mentoring will be used to describe any type of developmental relationship.

Herbert (1989) also captured data that revealed that the climate of race relations in the United States affected the lives of Black men. The research indicated that the Civil Rights Movement had a significant impact on the way the men in the study viewed themselves as Black men (Herbert, 1990). The events of the 1960's and 1970's increased the amount of psychic energy needed to develop a positive racial identity. The development of a positive racial identity was credited as helping the men to cope with the racial discrimination they encountered while working toward their career goals. This study exclusively focused on entrepreneurs, a population that clearly differs from other managers. Entrepreneurs have more control over their work environment than managers who operate in public or private settings. The results of this study should be taken seriously, though the small sample size is a consideration when generalizing the results.

Tatum (1997) draws on the racial identity studies by Parham (1989) and the adult development work of Levinson (1978) to make the point that being in midlife may be an increasingly difficult time to deal with racial identity, yet the typical adult development increases the likelihood that this will occur. Levinson considers midlife to span from ages 35-55, the time when a person will typically have increased career opportunities. For Blacks in predominately White organizations, their ability to take advantage of the career opportunities "depends in large part on their ability and willingness to conform to those values and behaviors that have been legitimized by the White culture (Tatum, 1997, p. 84)." Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) propose that developing a racial identity allows an individual some protection from racist messages that conflict with one's own self image. A positive racial identity is of increased importance for Black men given how they experience racism.

Harris and Sim, (2002) introduced the idea that racial identity is fluid and can be conceptualized along three dimensions: internal racial identity, external racial identity, and expressed racial identity. Internal racial identity constitutes the race of which one considers him or herself to be a member, while external racial identity represents the race that others attribute to an individual. For example, a person who has a White mother and a Latino father may consider himself to be Latino. His Whiteness is not part of how he defines himself internally. This same person may be perceived by others as being White due to his visual appearance, in which case, his external racial identity would conflict with his internal racial identity. The last part of this model includes expressed racial identity. This is the extent to which "an individual's words, actions and mannerisms convey certain beliefs or expectancies about his or her race" (O'Quinn, 2006). Expressed

racial identity involves the messages about a person's race that can be gleaned from his behavior.

Biculturalism

Du Bois (1903) acknowledged that Black people in the United States simultaneously lived in two worlds, one Black and one White. Du Bois referred to this experience as dual-consciousness, however the concept has been rephrased and expanded. In her study, Bell (1990) investigated the impact of this dual-consciousness, referring to it as a "bicultural stress". The author described the experience of managing the demands and expectations of two cultures, particularly when they have a contentious history. Bell proposed that minorities "strive to retain allegiance to their own culture while participating in their workplace culture. Organizational cultures – large scale, hierarchical, white, and male-dominated – have their own set of norms, traditions, and values and in the extreme, and are prototypes of the Anglo-Saxon tradition and the Protestant Ethic" (Bell, 1990, p.465). In these instances, she suggested that women were successful when they adopted a "corporate" identity that mirrored that of White men.

Black Life in Predominately White Organizations

In *Rage of a Privilege Class*, Cose (1993) discussed how "different" organizational life is for Black people. One of his interviewees said that when an energetic young White male entered an organization at entry level, he was regarded as ambitious. However, if a similar level of drive and determination was displayed by a Black man, he was not perceived as a team player, and his expectations of what the company could deliver were viewed as unrealistic. The underlying notion is that Black people can do everything that the job requires and still not be accepted as equals (Cose,

1993). Successful Blacks often feel more alienated from society than Blacks that are members of less privileged economic classes as a result of this phenomenon.

Davis and Watson (1985) looked at the lives of both Black men and women within corporate America. The authors described how Black employees experienced racism under the guise of "corporate politics" and the exclusion from social networks. The study also revealed strategies and coping mechanisms used by Black people to deal with the stressors in corporate America. They categorized managers by using definitions that reflected their management style and behavior within the organization. Mobility within the organization was influenced by performance, education, social interactions with White members of the organization, and the ability to tolerate racism (Davis & Watson, 1982). The authors did not identify how many women were in the study though they did conclude that Black women had less organizational supports than Black men, White men, or White women. Davis and Watson (1982) said little about their research design and this made it difficult to decipher how the researchers arrived at many of the conclusions.

Developmental Relationships

Thomas (1990) studied the two types of developmental relationships that Blacks established in organizations. One hundred ninety-seven participants were given a questionnaire about their career experiences. Thirty-five Black men participated in the study, more than half of whom occupied entry level positions. The author defined a developmental relationship as, "one that provides needed support for the enhancement of an individual's career development and organizational experience. It is also a relationship in which the parties have knowledge of one another and from which both

may potentially benefit (Thomas, 1990, p. 480)." These relationships were considered either mentorship or sponsorship. Black male "protégés", were found to have developmental relationships in varying proportions: Twenty-two percent had other Black men as mentors or sponsors, 6 % Black women, 56% White men and 16 % White women (Thomas, 1990). White men were found to be the most frequent mentor or sponsor across racial and gender groups.

This study also indicated that Black people intentionally develop relationships with other Black people across the organizational hierarchy. Same race developmental relationships provided more psychosocial support than cross race relationships (Thomas, 1990). Same sex developmental relationships also provided more psychosocial benefits and more career support than cross sex relationships (Thomas, 1990). These findings indicated both the power differential between groups, and the need to establish relationships with members of the organization who had similar and dissimilar race and sex group memberships. In addition, the number of Blacks that had White mentors indicated that Blacks may respond to the organizational message that the relationships with White people, particularly White men, have the greatest potential to influence their career (Thomas, 1990).

Black Executives

Collins (1997) published *Black Corporate Executives* based on interviews she conducted in 1986 and 1992. Her research included topics of upward mobility, racialized positions, and social networks. The focus was on "top executives", including chief executives, presidents, and vice presidents. The study included 76 executives, 13 of whom were women. Particular attention was given to the social, political, and economic

conditions as they relate to Blacks' advancement into executive positions. Collins (1997) found that Black managers were primarily given an opportunity to hold executive positions in support functions, human resources, and public relations (Collins, 1997). Once in these positions, they were not promoted to a higher level in the organization.

In *Breaking Through*, Thomas and Garbarro (1999) examined another group of executives, including "corporate officers" who had a level of authority across multiple departments in organizations. The researchers looked at the career development and advancement of minority executives in corporate America that held positions in core business units. Their study included interviews of African-American, Asian American, and Hispanic American managers. Their group of 54 minority managers also included eight women. They found that minorities who performed better than their White peers stayed in positions approximately 2-3 years longer than their White counterparts (Thomas and Garbarro, 1999). In order for minorities to advance through middle and upper management to the executive level, they found they had to achieve greater "success" and have fewer "failures" than the White members of their peer group. Having a large network of mentors or sponsors also played a major role in the advancement of minorities (Thomas, 2001).

Black Managers

Carver and Livers (2003) used 39 interviews conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership between 1996 and 1997, in addition to 270 surveys of African-American leaders and an additional 20 in depth interviews between 1999 and 2001. Their objective was to better understand the experiences of Black male managers as they adapted to and became successful in predominately White corporate settings. Seven areas along which

the experiences of Black employees differed from that of White employees were

identified: identity, responsibility, race, gender, networking, mentoring, and political

savvy (Carver & Livers, 2003). Misunderstandings and the anticipation of being

misinterpreted created a "miasma" for Black managers when dealing with members of

other racial groups. The miasma was described as a "cloud" or "fog" that caused Black

leaders to expel extra energy that was not related to doing the work. The miasma had

three main effects: Black managers adopted a consistent protective stance, they reduced

how much they trusted others, and it reinforced the belief that they had to work twice as

hard as White people.

The authors especially acknowledged that additional stress was created within

"traditionally White male workplaces" (Carver & Livers, 2003). The lack of trust seemed

particularly related to peers, as the Black managers felt coworkers were hesitant to view

them as leaders, or accept them as part of the team. The protective stance provided a

perpetual preparation to be able to react to racialized incidents in a calculated way.

While working to constantly prove themselves and display their competence, middle

managers ensured that they would not negatively impact the chance for other Black

people to have future opportunities (Carver & Livers, 2003). Survey data revealed 51%

of Black managers thought that their mistakes would have a negative impact on other

Blacks in the organization. Ninety-five percent of Black professionals reported having a

responsibility to help other Black people succeed in the organization. In addition to the

miasma, Black professionals generally had to operate in organizations where most of

their White colleagues did not acknowledge that race impacted their experience in the

organization. The research was presented in a generalized way using terms like "black

professionals" or "black managers", thus it did not provide insight into specific challenges that middle managers face.

The authors highlighted important gender differences. Black men reported having to pay extra attention to their words and body language when interacting with White coworkers. This seemed to be especially important for those having larger physical builds and darker complexions (Carver & Livers, 2003). There was a common concern about being perceived as intimidating, threatening, or angry. In addition, the men reported tension surrounding their relationships with White women at work. They worried how others might perceive the relationship, given the stereotypes of Black men as sexual predators who desire White women. Black men also reported dealing with individuals that assumed they played sports or had extensive sports related knowledge.

Jones (1986) conducted research over a three year period, where he interviewed approximately 30 Black executives and 200 Black managers. The sample included men and women, Whites, Blacks, "other minorities" at various levels in the organization. This study's biggest contribution was that it addressed concerns specifically related to Black middle managers. The Black middle manager must make the difficult choice of whether or not to confront the instances where they had reasons to believe their career development had been stifled because of race. The consequence of not speaking up could set the precedent that it is acceptable not to promote a particular person, due in part to race, which could negatively impact decisions about future opportunities. Confronting racism could also have a negative outcome. Regardless of whether the manager was able to substantiate the alleged discrimination, there was a risk of being labeled overly sensitive, "a troublemaker, not a team player" (Jones, 1986). Unfortunately, the term

"black mangers" was used throughout the article, making it difficult to ascertain whether there were other challenges to being a middle manager. However, the study provides insight about the major differences of Blacks in middle management within predominately White organizations. These individuals were in positions where they felt compelled to deny the impact of race while clearly enduring racial prejudice.

In *The Black Manager*, Dickens and Dickens (1991) proposed a theory of Black career development that has four stages: entry, adjusting, planned growth, and success. As Black managers progress through each stage, they develop perspectives that aid their psychological survival as a Black manager, and skills that are the tangible extension of what is required for success at that level. The authors suggested that the effects of racism and the legacy of slavery cause Black managers to experience "anxiety and stress" in positions where they are responsible for subordinates. As a "cultural group", Blacks had little experience being in positions of power, especially over Whites. The authors described the five main concerns listed below (Dickens & Dickens, 1991, p.311):

1. The challenge of ensuring fairness to both White and minority subordinates
2. The possibility of mistreating people the way the Black boss was mistreated
3. The newness of being in charge of Whites
4. The possibility that Whites will not take direction from or support a Black boss
5. The possibility of White subordinates making negative comments about the Black boss's managerial style

The researchers went on to identify additional issues that may arise when dealing with Black employees. The first was that of "self-hate". Black subordinates attributed the negative stereotypes about Black people to the Black managers. The second concern is an extension of the first. Since Blacks are not accustomed to seeing other Blacks in positions of power, they may reject the Black boss and challenge his authority by

resisting performing the tasks that they are assigned. Lastly, Black staff members may assume that because their Black supervisor is in a management position, they have "sold out". The manager may experience resentment from Black employees because they feel the manager has betrayed them.

These sentiments proposed by Dickens and Dickens (1991) are unique and provide some insight to the psycho-sociological factors influencing Black managers. The authors collected data from previous research on Black male managers conducted by Jackie Dickens using a structured questionnaire followed by an interview. In addition, the personal experience of both authors while conducting training sessions with managers was considered additional data. The managers that attended their seminars were of various gender and racial groups. However, the conclusions were based on an undisclosed amount of managers.

Theoretical Approach

Alderfer (1987) determined that racial group memberships influenced how people understand and interpret the events that transpire during interracial work relationships. Further, race relations are best understood from a group perspective. Intergroup relations theory provides a method for understanding racial dynamics of groups embedded in organizations (Alderfer, 1980; Alderfer, Alderfer, Tucker, & Tucker, 1980; Alderfer & Thomas, 1988; Thomas & Alderfer, 1989). The present study used an embedded intergroup relations theory to conceptualize the experience of these men. Consequently, one of the goals was to develop a more holistic understanding of the participants as having multiple group memberships that impact them. The interactions within and across identity and organizational groups were examined, specifically looking to better

understand how the multiple group memberships affected these professional relationships.

The dissertation focused on three primary research questions: (1) What factors influence the development of Black men as middle managers? (2) How do Black men experience being middle managers in the organization? (3) How do Black middle managers relate to other Black members of the organization?

Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory

The theory was used to understand groups within organizations. Accordingly, the group is the primary unit of analysis and is essential to using the theory. Alderfer provides an encompassing definition of a group:

> A human group is a collection of individuals (1) who have significantly interdependent relations with each other, (2) who perceive themselves as a group reliably distinguishing members from nonmembers, (3) whose group identity is recognized by nonmembers (4) who as groups members acting alone or in concert have significantly interdependent relations with other groups and (5) whose roles in the group are therefore a function of themselves, from other group members and from non-group members (Alderfer, 1977, p.230).

Groups within organizations can be divided into two categories, identity groups and organizational groups. Organizational group membership is conferred upon an individual at the time they are hired by a company. When employees join an organization, they become part of both task and hierarchal groups. For example, a senior accounting manager is part of the task group of accounting and the hierarchal group of management. By comparison, a newly hired auditor may also be a member of the accounting task group, but not at the management level. Depending on which hierarchal group to which one belongs will influence the amount of responsibility, autonomy, and authority one has in a given position (Alderfer, 1987). Members of an identity group

share common biological traits, historical experiences, and are vulnerable to similar social forces (Alderfer, 1987). Identity groups include the following: race, gender, age, sexual preference, and family.

Alderfer et al. (1980) suggested that at any given time an individual is concurrently representing all of their identity and organizational groups. The group that will be most salient depends on which other group memberships are represented, and the focus of the intergroup interaction (Alderfer, 1982). The intergroup exchange is further influenced by the context in which it occurs or is "embedded". Embeddedness is the concept that addresses how the relationships between groups are impacted by the organizations in which the groups are and the environment in which the organization operates (Alderfer, 1982).

The theory proposes that there are five characteristics of intergroup behavior that can be observed regardless of the composition on the group: group boundaries, power differences, affective patterns, cognitive formations, and leadership behavior. Power differences refer to the varying levels of access to resources held by different groups. As groups gain power and access to resources the strength of their boundaries grows. Affective patterns describe how one group feels about another group. The more a group attributes positive feelings to their own group and negative feelings to another group the tighter the group's boundaries will be. Cognitive distortions describe the distinct way that members of different groups will interpret both objective and subjective data (Alderfer, 1987). This includes distortions that are a result of theories and ideologies held by group members to explain the behavior of other groups. Additionally, there is the behavior of group leaders. Group leaders have the ability to impact all the characteristics

of intergroup exchanges. The behavior of a group leader can also be viewed as a reflection of the relationship within and between groups.

A critical component of Alderfer's embedded intergroup relations theory is the concept of group boundaries. This theory proposed that interactions between groups are impacted by fluctuations in boundary permeability (Alderfer & Smith, 1982). For a group to prosper its boundaries must neither be too loose nor too tight; "optimal" in relation to its environment would be best. Dimensions along which boundary conditions may vary include: goals, authority relations, economic conditions, role definitions, communication patterns, human energy, affect distribution, intergroup dynamics, unconscious basic assumptions, time span, and cognitive work. Both the physical and psychological boundaries affect the transactions among groups and group members. An important premise relating to optimal boundary permeability is that tighter boundaries are required in a threatening environment or in situations where the work is emotionally demanding (Alderfer & Smith, 1982).

Parallel process is an unconscious phenomenon in which members of one group take on similar thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of another group after repeated interactions with each other (Alderfer, 1987). This concept is congruent with embeddedness. Essentially, the patterns of interaction within an organization reflect the environment in which it operates and are reflected in the dynamics between subgroups in the system. Further, the dynamics that occur at the top of the organization affect the levels below.

Middleness

Oshry (1994) proposed that individuals' positions in the hierarchy affect how they feel in the positions and the behaviors that they display. Being in the middle of an organization or system is considered a condition that extends beyond a single position. "Middleness is the condition in which we exist between two or more individuals or groups; these groups have differing priorities, perspectives, goals, needs and wants; and each of them exerts pressure on us to function on its behalf" (Oshry, 1994, p.3). Consequently, being in the middle can be "disempowering" as the individual in the middle expels a lot of energy trying to balance competing demands.

Oshry (1994) suggested that middles are used by those above and below as emissaries and messengers. In doing so, they provide each group with a buffer against the other but must also try to remain in the middle. This makes the middle role inherently confusing and exhausting, as their increased contact with both tops and bottoms allows them to empathize with both points of view. As a result, middles become ambivalent and overtime find themselves advocating for both sides of the same issue. This usually results in pleasing neither group and produces the isolated feeling of being in the middle.

Middle managers are often physically separated from their peers as they are sometimes the head of a function or department. Their positions separate them, and middle managers often find themselves in competition with those at their level (Oshry, 1994). Finally, managers in the middle of the organization also tend to blame themselves for the challenges they face, believing that if they had greater skill or understanding, their problems would be minimal.

Thought the concept of middleness is different from being a middle manager, middle management can be difficult to define. The definition of middle management is fluid often depends on the number of levels of management within the organization. Stewart (1987) defines middle managers as those that are below general managers that report to the top executive and above front line managers. The term middle management includes a diverse group of jobs varying in size and scope. In order to better develop middle managers it is necessary to recognize the different experiences they have within middle management (Stewart, 1987).

Conclusion

The prior research provided prescriptive strategies for being successful, and a comprehensive understanding of the factors that limit occupational achievement of Black managers in predominately White organizations. Despite this acknowledgement, the scholarly research on Black managers has left a gap in the literature dedicated to the experience of Blacks in middle management. Contemporary studies on Black managers either combine data from all levels of management (Jones, 1986; Carver & Livers, 2003) or solely focus on those that have reached the executive level (Collins, 1997; Thomas & Gabbaro, 1999). The lack of research on middle managers is not surprising given the amorphous and ambiguous position of being in the middle (Stewart, 1987). Black male middle managers are in the middle of their predominately White organizations and seemingly in the middle of two worlds, one Black and the other White.

The present study adds to the previous research by solely focusing on Black men in middle management in predominately White organizations. Embedded intergroup relations theory was used to conceptualize the experiences of these men. This theory

allowed the author to develop a holistic understanding of the participants as having

multiple group memberships that impact them in predominately White organizations

(Alderfer, et al., 1980). The interactions within and across organizations and identity

groups were examined, specifically looking to better understand how the multiple group

memberships affect the Black men's professional relationships. The dissertation study

focused on three primary research objectives: (1) to explore specific issues that were

salient to Black men during their rise to middle management (e.g. developmental

experiences, key relationships, race); (2) to develop further understanding of how Black

men experience middle management (3) to shed light on the dynamics of the

relationships between Black men in positions of middle management and the other

members of their organizations.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Recruitment

The Black managers who met the criteria for this study were identified using the primary investigator's networks. A number of personal and professional contacts were emailed a description of the study and the criteria for participation (see Appendix A). This email encouraged the contacts to forward the contents to people in their networks who might be interested in participating in the study. Each response to the recruitment email was responded to with a phone call to determine the level of eligibility. Individuals that met the eligibility requirement and had an interest in participating were asked to provide a time and date that they would be available for an interview. Some of the men the researcher contacted were not receptive to participating in the study. These individuals did not reply to the email or return a subsequent phone call, but no one directly stated that they did not want to participate in the study.
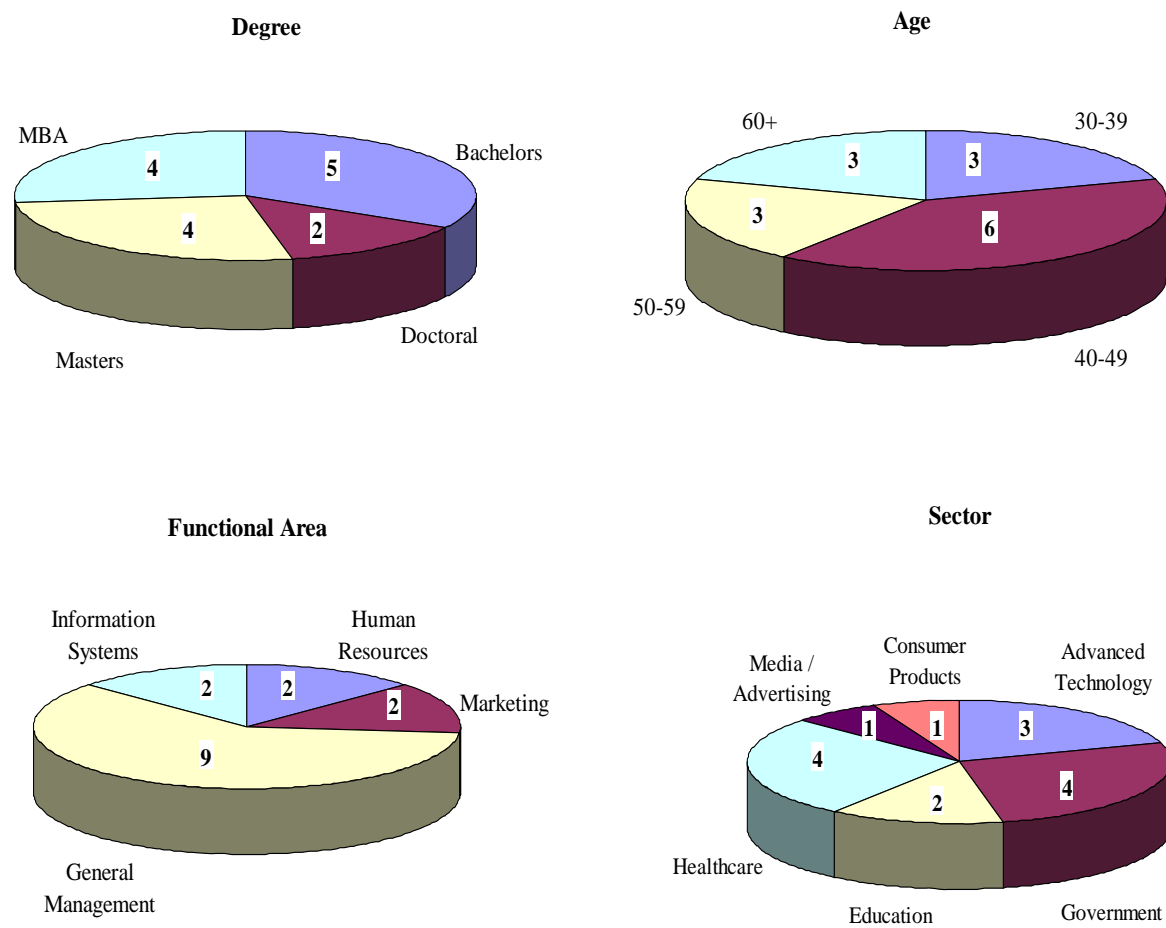
Participants

Twenty-three Black men participated in this study. Of these, 15 met the criteria of a middle manager as defined by this study. For the purpose of this study, a middle manager was defined as one who has experience "managing managers". Line managers

were defined as managers that have experience managing front-line employees. For a person to be considered a manager in either category, they must have had at least three direct reports in their supervisory positions. To reach individuals in middle management, participants were required to be at least one level above the first level of management and one level below the highest level of management in their respective organizations.

Table 1 provides a summary of the characteristics of the participants. Included in this description are the following factors: title, industry and functional area, age, education, personal demographics, and early experiences.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Degree

MBA 4
Masters 4
Bachelors 5
Doctoral 2

Age

60+ 3
30-39 3
50-59 3
40-49 6

Functional Area

Information Systems 2
Human Resources 2
Marketing 2
General Management 9

Sector

Media / Advertising 1
Consumer Products 1
Advanced Technology 3
Government 4
Education 2
Healthcare 4

Middle Managers

All have a minimum of a Bachelors degree. Eight obtained a Masters degree, four of which were MBAs, and two possessed doctoral degrees, including one PhD and one MD. These men represented various industries: government, advanced technology, healthcare, media/advertising, consumer products, and education. They also worked in a range of functional areas: human resources, marketing, information systems, and general management. When asked about their racial group membership, seven responded African American, seven respond Black, and one responded Black Caribbean. Participants ranged in ages from 32 to 75 with average age of 50. Most of the participants are currently in middle management; however, three of the participants were at the executive level. Though all participants were requested to speak from their experience while they were in middle management, the data in some cases may reflect a mixture of upper and middle management.

Measures

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol (see Appendix B) consisted of a set of open ended questions, administered in a semi-structured manner. The protocol was created by the author, based on a review of the literature regarding participants' experiences of being Black managers and an understanding of embedded intergroup relations theory. Prior to reviewing the literature, the researcher created a list of questions that warranted answers relevant to the nature of the dissertation. The questions that remained unanswered after the literature review became the basis for the questions in the interview protocol. The

interview protocol was divided into three parts: rapport building, primary questions, and closing.

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire was administered at the conclusion of the interview. It was thought that the rapport built during the interview would allow interviewees to divulge biographical information when they felt most comfortable. This questionnaire had only eight questions and took less than two minutes to complete (see Appendix C). The questionnaire was read to the participant whose interview took place via telephone.

Other Sources of Data

The interviewer kept private notes detailing the experience with interviewees, including information about the setting, the process of the interview, and personal thoughts and emotions evoked before, during, and after the interview process. These private notes specifically answered the following four questions necessary to capture the researcher's experience of the interview: (1) What was this interview like for me? (2) What was it like to spend time with this individual? (3) What do you feel like now? (4) What feeling did you get when you entered the building? The goal of these notes was to provide data that could not be captured on an audio recording, including my thoughts and feelings during the interview.

Procedure

Progression of the Research Design

The initial design involved interviewing 30 Black men who met the criteria for a manager, worked in a corporate setting, and were between the ages of 25-60. Three

groups of 10 participants each including ages 25-35, 35-45, and 45- 60. After

preliminary recruitment efforts, it was apparent that the target population was rare and

not easily identifiable.

Changes ensued that altered the initial design. The first changes included

reducing the sample size and eliminating the age restriction. Then, in an effort to better

capture the experience of Black managers, a decision was made to eliminate the

requirement of corporate settings. This allowed the study to capture the experience of

Black men in management in all settings, including government, education, and non-

profit organizations. Further, by opening up the criteria it became easier to recruit

managers at multiple levels in an organization that could potentially participate in the

study.

As data collection progressed, the research revealed two samples. The first three

participants that were scheduled to be interviewed met the criteria for middle managers.

It was then decided that the study would focus on understanding the research questions as

they related to middle managers. Both the initial and subsequent changes comprise the

final research methodology.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 23 Black men in management positions.

Participants were asked to dedicate approximately 90 minutes for the interview. The

interviews ranged in length from 57 minutes to 135 minutes. However, most interviews

lasted between 90 minutes and 105 minutes. Interviews were conducted on a one-on-one

basis and held at a setting of the participant's choosing. Three interviews were conducted

at the participants' homes; two were at a hotel; and one interview was conducted via

telephone. Twenty participants were interviewed at their places of employment. A middle manager whose primary place of employment was outside of the United States was the sole telephone interview. Participants were interviewed in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.

The interviewer made an effort not to sit directly across from any of the interviewees in an effort to reduce the barriers between him and the participant. This was also intended to reduce the feeling of being on opposing sides of the study and to promote the idea that the research was a joint exploration. In a further effort to build rapport, the interviewer gave the participants a brief life history that included the reasons the study was of interest. Participants then had an opportunity to ask any questions they had prior to beginning the protocol. Participants were reminded to focus on their experience as middle managers. Prior to concluding the interview, the interviewer asked each participant to complete a demographics sheet.

Each participant was informed that any information revealed during the interview would remain confidential, and they would be anonymous in the final report. Further, their names and that of their respective employers would not be revealed. Interviewees were reminded that participation in the study was completely voluntary. Participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix D) to confirm that they were briefed on the conditions under which the interview would take place. Participants were also asked to sign an additional consent form if they agreed to be tape-recorded. The one phone interview participant received the consent forms in the mail which was returned to the interviewer within two weeks.

Interviews were recorded using an audio digital recorder. These recordings were used in addition to the notes taken by the interviewer during and after the interview. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. To protect the identity of the participants, all identifying information was removed from the materials, including the names of the participants and their respective companies. All of the data collected has been kept anonymous and confidential. To ensure the confidentiality of the data, alphabetical codes were assigned to the interview transcripts and questionnaires. When necessary, quotations were altered to ensure the anonymity of the participant.

Of the 23 men who were interviewed two objected to being recorded and six participants did not meet the definition of middle management. The data collected from these eight participants is not reflected in the study. This research reflects the experience of 15 Black male middle managers from 14 different organizations.

Interviewer

All interviews were conducted by the author, a Black male of 26 years of age, pursuing a doctorate in organizational psychology. The author was also currently in a level one management position. The decision of the primary investigator to administer all of the interviews was a conscious decision. It was based on the tenant that the validity of the data collected and the interpretation would be enhanced by matching the race of the interviewer and the interviewee (Alderfer, et al., 1980). The race, age, and gender of the interviewer may have positively influenced the ability to collect data. The participants may have related to the author in the same way they would with a protégé. Shared group memberships can be so influential that another researcher with different group memberships may not be able to replicate the findings of this study.

How Data Were Analyzed

The data was analyzed by utilizing grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and embedded intergroup relations theory. The researcher used the first phase of grounded theory methodology which required the compilation of answers from all participants noting similarities and differences in their answers. The goal of the first two steps in this coding process was to dissect and categorize discrete thoughts and concepts according to the distinct phenomena they represented (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After the data had been dissected and labeled, comparisons among the data were observed to both group together similar concepts and to label the overarching concepts for the phenomena they represented.   The following two phases of grounded theory required the extraction of themes from the data.

Axial coding was the next coding procedures, and required the researcher to decipher the data by establishing links between categories and subcategories, allowing the overlapping themes from the participants' interviews to emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The themes developed during this step tended to be broader than those extracted during the previous phase. The new categories were more refined, prevalent throughout the interviews, and allowed the examination of underlying factors among the common themes. During the third and final coding procedure, selective coding, the main themes and categories were selected. Those categories that required further refinement and development were expanded (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The research was designed to gather data at the individual and group levels. As embedded intergroup relations theory informed the methods used to collect the data, it was also used to determine what themes were most salient throughout the data. The primary researcher used the results of the data analysis as the basis for the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

This chapter has three subsections: the ascent to managing managers, experiences as a middle manager, and relating to other Black men in the organization. Black male middle managers in this study will be referred to as Black middle managers.

Ascent to Managing Managers

Participants were asked questions designed to elicit responses about factors that influenced their development as a middle manager. Development is used as an inclusive term including progression from one level in the organizational hierarchy to another and progression in the ability to perform the tasks associated with being a Black male middle manager. These questions asked about individuals that had a positive impact and any other experiences that might have expedited or impaired their managerial development.

Developmental Relationships with a Manager

Participants were asked to talk about an individual that had a particular positive impact on their development as a manager. While it was difficult for some participants to select only one person, all Black male middle managers mentioned the impact of a manager. Ninety-three percent felt that a manager had the most positive impact.

The average age of the participant's manager was 42. The managers averaged 12 years older than the participants. The difference in age ranged from 25 years older to the same age as the respondent. Of the managers mentioned, there was one Black male and one Hispanic female. The twelve other managers were White, including six men and five women. Two of the women were identified by their ethnicities as Jewish and Latvian. One of the men was classified by his ethnicity as Irish and another by his Quaker religious heritage.

Displaying Potential

Interviewees recalled displaying their potential prior to forming a developmental relationship with their manager. Potential referred to the capacity the participant had to perform well and advance in the organization. In some instances, participants thought the manager recognized their ability while interviewing them for a position in the organization. Other relationships developed as a result of performing in their current role beyond the expectations of their manager.

Those that developed an immediate connection with the manager typically interviewed with the person before joining the organization. They believed that the initial interaction laid the groundwork for the developmental relationships to flourish. Though participants expressed uncertainty when asked about why there was an immediate connection, they presumed that there was a competency or future potential that the manager identified.

Not all of the men reported their managers taking an immediate interest in them.

Some felt that their managers reached out to them because they had proved themselves in someway. Proving themselves was defined by the author of this dissertation to mean producing results in their current position to the satisfaction of their supervisor.

One middle manager proved himself in a way that differed from the rest. He extended an offer to support a new manager who was going to take over responsibly for the department he worked in:

> …I said, "Hey, I think you'll be great for the job. I will make sure that I smooth the way here. I support what you're doing. Trust me, it'll be great." He came on board, he said, "I really appreciate it." I said, "You don't know these guys; you're going to need somebody who knows stuff, and I think you're going to do great." So we hooked up right away. He could see I was trying to help him…

Role of the Manager in the Development of the Black male middle manager

Participants revealed that their managers provided moral support, prepared them to advance in the organization, and obtain promotions. Participants reported that their relationship with their manager was supportive and indicated that the manager provided guidance, encouragement, and motivation. The managers would reinforce the potential they saw in the participants to be future leaders in the organization. In addition, Black middle managers that mentioned being prepared to advance in the organization cited the intangible learning they found beneficial, including "negotiating the system" and receiving advice on leadership.

Their managers also prepared them in tangible ways that the Black middle managers referred to as "exposure". Exposure included tangible developmental opportunities including stretch assignments, being in situations where they could observe the senior leaders in the organization, and where senior leaders could become familiar with them. Finally, receiving a promotion was considered the most influential. Some

participants went on to describe patterns of behavior whereby their managers would promote them in a lockstep fashion each time they moved up the organizational hierarchy.

   Promotions.   Five interviewees described their managers as being favored by the organization or on a "fast track", meaning they ascended to positions of authority in less time than others in the organization. Participants with both male and female managers expressed this sentiment. Six managers that had a relationship with the black middle managers became vice presidents before the relationship ended. Others that were not vice presidents had high ranking positions in their respective organizations such as a Dean in the academic settings and a colonel in the military. With these affiliations in the organization, participants believed they had access to important connections that assisted them in becoming managers.

   Five respondents had the experience of a manager continually promoting them as they rose up the hierarchy themselves. These men felt that this was mutually beneficial because by promoting them the manager was essentially ensuring that work would get done, they were proven performers. Managers also helped the Black middle managers to be promoted by ensuring that when it was time for promotion, the participant would have the qualifications listed in the position description. These sentiments were expressed by one middle manager in particular.

   …I was just fortunate to be paired with a gentleman that was on the fast track with (organization name) and every time that he moved I moved. I mean, that's kind of how it worked. He also taught me and kind of guided me. [He said] here are some prerequisites. So if you get this now, when I get ready to move on I'll be able to – you'll have this in your bag, so to speak. So it's not only that, he kind of walked me through that process. When there were trainings that were available, that he knew would put me in a good position [he sent me to them]. At

the end of the day while he had probably the last say, he had to sell it to his boss as well.

Exposure. Exposure was another one of the valued benefits of the Black middle manager's relationship with their manager. Exposure included being able to see how something worked and seemed to include playing an active role. The definition of exposure extends to include being visible to senior leadership. The participants acknowledged that there was a level of risk involved for the manager in providing them with exposure. Often, exposure would include "stretch assignments," which would help Black middle managers to develop capabilities beyond that offered in their current role. The interviewees revealed that they had opportunities that were not typical of others their age. The following quotation is one example.

> He put me on teams where normally you have to have a certain amount of time in the agency. Being on the schemes, I went out and I found the drugs. I discovered the drugs, he put me in those positions, he put me in positions to as a young officer go out and liaise with other federal agencies. I was working with people who had 20 years experience. I was walking in the door being two years on the job, but I was all in those key meetings taking those key decisions for my chief I think I was around 24 or 25.

The benefit from the "stretch assignments" extended beyond the tangible learning that can come from doing something new. Black middle managers benefited from being given autonomy and the authority to make "big decisions". There was a significant learning or growth that resulted from having autonomy and authority to make an impact on the company at that point in their career. There was a level of risk associated with providing these opportunities for the Black men, as they felt their managers had to be confident that they would succeed before placing them in a new situation. The following quotations specifically mention the impact of the stretch assignments and acknowledge the risk they held for their managers:

Yeah. The woman that I work for, I want to get this right, because she could have done more, but she gave me an opportunity for exposure. She arranged for me to make presentations in front of the board, which was good exposure because they were able to assess my presentation skills and my analytical skills. And then she gave me some pretty tough stretch assignments, which helped facilitate career growth and to position me for promotional opportunities. She could have done a better job, but she was somewhat risk averse, so she would not put me out there if, in fact, she didn't think it was safe. Hindsight says that you should have put me out there and stretched me out there even further, and I could have had more of a positive impact within the organization.

I think its exposure. People always equate exposure with experience and it's not because experience is just spending time, zero to 'n'. Exposure is are you being put in the situations where you can see how things operate, you can see how people make decisions, how they think, how they talk, how they walk, how things actually tick and work together in their environment. So I've been able to get some very good exposure in a short period of time and I've been fortunate enough that people trusted me and put me in [those] situations.

The intangibles. Managers shared information with the Black middle managers that was not easy for them to describe. Negotiating the system is one example. The interviewees found it helpful when their manager shared ways to have success within the organization and achieve their goals, through means that would not be "common knowledge". This included giving them information that was "off the record" about the inner workings of the organization. A few Black middle managers also mentioned that their managers taught them to be a leader of others. They learned the process of how to plan ahead and how to give people direction. One participant recalled the specific acronym he was taught that related to managing people:

He had a very simple philosophy called the TIPS. T – Talk to people. I – inform, keep them informed. P – be predictable. S – be sensitive in terms of people, backgrounds, way of life, social, and all those things. Be sensitive to that; ethnicity, gender. Now he would probably tell you that I already had it before I met him, but he sort of helped me refine it.

Relationships with People Other than Managers

Male Role Model

Four participants mentioned their fathers. As role models, they provided the values that the individuals used to guide them as people and managers. The respondents also mentioned that their fathers contributed to their development as managers because they incorporated values from their fathers into their current management style. One participant that did not cite his father as a role model mentioned the importance of his uncles who worked in the same field. The other mentioned a teacher who was said to have served as a strong male role model that believed in him and challenged him.

Other Members of the Organization

Participants also mentioned other members of the organization who were instrumental in their development as managers. Those individuals mentioned were all Black co-workers, who did not always work in the same department as the participant. These individuals provided support and "looked out for them". The most common form of support was providing feedback on work related projects and advice that would help them advance their careers.

> …There was a letter that went out looking for EEO representatives in each one of the different field offices around the country. And the head of the New York office called me to come to his office one day and asked me if I was interested in doing that. I said, "Okay."…He gave it to me, I went down and I read it and I said "Absolutely not." I mean just kind of like "What is it? There are no guidelines, there are no real teeth in it." So I called him up, again arrogance I think. I called and said, "Why are we doing this? Why are we wasting our time with this?" He listened to me and he's usually pretty quiet. And he says, "There are really – when you put something down on paper and it says this is what you can and can't do, you're setting limits for yourself. There's nothing on paper, you can set your own limits at that particular point." I said, "Aha."

Executive Coach. One was an executive coach who was an African American woman. Benefits of this relationship were that the other person could relate to his experience and there was a level of comfort that was not felt in some cross racial

relationships. The coach taught him self-awareness not only related to managing others in general, but included a component related to being Black in an organization.

Personal Attributes

Eleven participants felt that personal attributes facilitated their development as managers. The personal attributes ranged from physical attributes to interpersonal characteristics: desire to learn, self awareness, initiative, receptive to feedback, desire to improve, recognizing opportunity, willingness to be a change agent, observant & attentive, desire to rise above, knowing how to communicate, knowledge of power and leadership, self confidence, not being afraid to ask for a mentor, and a desire to help others. The most specific attribute was a comprehensive understanding of the business. Six participants felt that understanding all sides of the business facilitated their development. Black middle managers reported that this understanding developed through taking tough jobs, accepting positions of responsibility, and working their way up.

Impeded Development

Self

Ten participants named themselves as the primary factor that slowed their development. Even if obstacles were in their path, they felt that the only thing that could stop them from overcoming an obstacle was their ability to get past it. Four Black male managers believed that outside influences were unable to slow them down, because they could overcome them by hard work or figuring out another way around them. Other

managers did not pursue management opportunities or seize opportunities that were

presented to them.

Own ability to overcome barriers. Two interviewees felt that their own ability

was the only factor that slowed them down. Despite acknowledging that racial barriers

existed, they maintained the belief that if race slowed them down, it was a reflection of

their ability to perform at the level that would allow them to overcome it.

> Excellence of performance will overcome any artificial barrier or many artificial
> barriers put in place by man. Excellent performance. So regardless of whatever it
> might be, it's excellent performance. So if I had to say barriers, the only barrier I
> saw was with me because I saw any other issues, whether it be racial, I always
> saw it as that's their problem as long as it doesn't get in my way.

> This may sound a little odd but not really. Me, I was the only barrier because
> when I noticed the barriers, and there were barriers, but when I finally noticed
> them, I was generally already by them. For instance, there were always people
> that [challenge you] for the wrong reasons, it could be for racial prejudice or just
> their own willingness to succeed, so many biases people have. They were always
> there, but I really never paid attention to it because I always believed that I was
> the one in control of my destiny. I always felt that you gave up so much control
> when you said that someone was holding you back. I'm not saying it's not true.
> Lord knows, I believe and understand that there are prejudices in the world and
> there's discrimination in the world. My mindset though and how I tried to work
> and deal with people was that if I gave you the control to say that you can actually
> influence my life that much, then you have won.

Not pursuing advancement opportunities. Three Black middle managers

mentioned that not seeking out positions that would advance them slowed their

development as a manager. Two respondents did not pursue managerial positions

aggressively, because they did not want to get into a position with out being fully

prepared to take on the responsibilities. One other middle manager reported that he did

not have a desire to manage, because he liked working on his own.

Not seizing opportunities that were presented to them. Other participants were

presented with opportunities that they did not accept. Of the three Black middle

managers that said this, two declined positions because of their families. Neither man

was willing to take an assignment that would require being separated from his family.

The main concern was their children and being present to rear them. Lastly, they did not

want to take their children out of school. A participant that was married reported that not

wanting to negatively impact his wife's career was also part of his decision. One Black

middle manager reported that his "stubbornness" to work in areas that were outside of the

role he came to the company to fill slowed him down by "about two years." He

described being inflexible when it pertained to working on projects that he was not

interested in.

　　　Interest in diversity work. One participant mentioned that his interest in diversity

"didn't always help". After presenting a report that revealed the company was violating

its diversity policy, he was transferred to another department to be the "group

supervisor". This was a lateral move in the organization. Before going to the next

department, he looked up the personnel files of the group members and discovered that

he was going to be the only African-American in the group and the people on his team

"were all performance problems". The following quotation details the events that led up

to his transfer:

> Probably interests didn't always help. In other words, things that I was interested
> in were not necessarily in the organization – the line of the organization that led to
> rapid movement. When I started at (Company Name), I started off in human
> resources as a technical recruiter and I went to different roles in human resources,
> including the diversity and non-discrimination, the affirmative action group; In
> fact I was a – kind of like the godfather of (Company Name)Affirmative Action
> Plan. I was certainly the architect of it. So, the – in doing some of that work, I
> personally know that I did not gain favor with some of the vice presidents at
> (Company Name).…In doing a compliance review in (State), our lab in (City), I
> came across something and we wrote it up in our report. When we went to
> present our report for review, going up through the organization, one of the Vice
> President, our Vice President, wanted me to take this discovery out of the report

and I refused to do it. Anyhow, this report had to go to another Vice President whose workforce was in the (City) lab. I had to present the report. I presented the report in its full context and (the Vice President of that group) was very upset by the findings because it was some of his management people out there in (City) that were violating (Company Name)'s non-discrimination policies. It was a simple thing. It was a membership in the (City) Club. The (City) Club does not allow blacks nor women on their premises…This had to be around 1972…Anyhow, this Vice President was upset upon hearing the discovery about his organization and he wanted it corrected. And so I felt good that it was in the report that we were open about it and he was going to take care of it. My Vice President however, did not like it.

Disparate Treatment

Black middle managers divulged that they were treated in ways that slowed down their progression. Not receiving promotions that they felt they deserved was the primary way the participants felt their development as managers was impacted. Also, they felt as if they had to overcome the perception in the organization that Black people could not be in leadership positions. The third factor was the impact of "organization politics". This term included hidden alliances, relationships that extended beyond the hours of work, membership in a certain circle of individuals, and a willingness to act in a way that would gain you favor with particular people in the organization. Five respondents cited racism at the organizational level as hampering their ability to advance and reducing opportunities for development.

Passed over for promotion. Six managers mentioned that they were not selected for promotions that they felt they deserved, albeit for different reasons. The explanations mostly centered on the theme concept "taking care of one's own". The sentiment was that White men tended to promote the people that most resembled them. "Politics" was also mentioned as a reason for them being denied promotional opportunities. The propensity to promote other White people was thought to occur from the connections and

networks that White people had access to because of their race. Black middle managers

often felt they were better qualified for the position than the person who was selected.

One participant said:

> …I would say that that probably kind of slowed down the progress, the fact that I was different because of my skin color and hair texture, and because they had not been exposed to blacks or because they had a certain stereotypical image of blacks. They felt we all looked alike, talked alike, and acted alike. And so, therefore, we couldn't add value. And I want to be clear that I don't resent it – but I know there were instances in my career where I was better qualified than the white male that was in HR. And I can't help but think that the mere fact that the guy was a white male and probably bonded real closely with the person that was making the decision as to who would get the job, that he was able to get that job ahead of me. And I was brave enough to confront the issue and to allege unfair treatment. But then they said to me I was playing the race card because at that time it was, like, well, affirmative action programs would help facilitate your getting into the organization. Now, you're in the organization and you're using the race issue to more or less justify the fact that this guy got the job over you. And I said, well, what distinguished him from me, and they weren't able to come up with any substantive reasons as to why he got the promotion. That was one instance that I went through.

Another contributor added:

> If you want to advance, you have to be white and that's it. You are in black skin, but you have to be white. Unless you could turn yourself into something like that, pretty much like them, you are not going to advance. So you said, well, you got to hang out with them. You got to go to the places they go. You got to live with them. You got to be them otherwise, you are just not going to make it. Nothing is 100%, but it was pretty much true. One of the feelings I had was because I saw guys that worked for me had gone on [to receive promotion] and soon it was almost like you are on a plantation and teaching the master's kids and now they go ahead and they become the bosses. It wasn't like they were under me and now they are over me. They were under me, they go to a different group or something like that, because something is offered over there and then the next thing you know, they are going beyond me getting promoted again.

Experience as a Middle Manager

The participants were asked questions about their experiences as middle

managers. They were asked to share the challenges of being a middle manager. The

intent of this question was to gain some insight regarding the pressures and demands of

their position in the middle of the organization. Interviewees were also asked to share

their experience managing employees of all racial and ethnic backgrounds; however two

questions specifically focused on their experience managing Black and White employees.

Executing Through Others

To ensure that employees achieve company objectives, Black middle managers

must ensure that the employees below them in the hierarchy are working in ways that will

achieve the company's goals. Achieving the desired results without actually having a

hand in the execution of the task was one of the primary challenges of being a middle

manager.   Since they had to rely on their direct reports to accomplish this task, managing

human capital was a primary concern for the respondents. As stated by one participant:

> When I was in the field or when I was on the line there's a job you're to do and
> you go out and do it and you pretty much know right then and there if you're
> getting the job done. Either the numbers are being posted or in the case of if
> you're on an assembly line, the widget's coming out a certain way, right? In
> management, you have that responsibility but you're not the one doing the work.
> So truly the definition of management to me is how do you get things done
> through other people, and people are quite complex. Some people you can tell
> them what you think is clear and they understand and go out and execute it.
> Someone else sees it entirely differently. So it's orchestrating and coordinating
> all these different people to do the things that you believe are right to do.

Fourteen out of fifteen Black male middle mangers mentioned meeting the needs

of their direct reports as a challenge of being a middle manager. The needs of direct

reports ranged from providing physical and financial resources to providing the

appropriate motivation and developmental opportunities. Managers also mentioned the

pressures of being leaders and additional responsibility as a challenging part of their role.

Managing Human Capital

The middle managers agreed that their position was complicated because it was

their responsibility to ensure that everyone was working together to achieve the same

goal. Getting everyone to work together was one of the tasks mentioned along with hiring. Bringing the "right people" onto the team was also burdensome. Black middle managers labeled this task as burdensome since it required a lot of time and energy, and often a lot of repeated work. One participant captured it as:

> It's tough to always get the right people, with the right motivation and right skills. So recruiting and retaining [is a challenge]. When you try to recruit a staff, if you want to hire 10 people you probably need to hire 20 in order to end up with 10, because a lot of them aren't going to work out. That's the toughest thing for me as a manager, managing the staff.

Motivation. Motivating employees was mentioned by four Black middle managers. One manager said that he did not think that he could motivate anyone but that he could inspire. Two other men mentioned getting employees to perform the "best they can and not just go through the motions."

Performance. Confronting performance issues seemed to be a difficult task for some of the participants. Dealing with job performance issues was described as "tough", because it placed the manager in the position of disciplinarian. The Black middle managers described having difficulties reconciling how well a direct report performed with potential violations of company policies. The participants had two different ways of approaching performance, one was fair and the other equitable. The decision point was whether or not one should incorporate who the employee was and how they performed when addressing a violation of company policy. One Black middle manager believed the person should not be taken into account:

> I think the biggest challenge of any manager is really – well should be – the people side of it, because when you're dealing with people it's very difficult sometimes. The other side of it to me came pretty easy. And being Black, as I tell people, I would get it from both ends. I got the whites saying, "You're prejudiced," and the Blacks saying, "You're prejudiced." All I'm saying is I do not care either way. I'm here to do a job and make a living, so you guys can look

at it and call it whatever you want, but being brought up, again, as a supervisor taking in HR, both sides.

One thing that my dad taught me is that you got to see through all of that. It doesn't make any difference whether you're Black or white. I don't really care from a job standpoint. I have one set of rules and that's it. You can't have two sets. And not only looking at it strictly on the color of someone's skin, but two sets looking on from – I've seen so many managers get trapped because they sat "you're a very, very good worker." One thing I always say, when you're doing any type of corrective action or discipline action, you need to focus in on the situation and not the individual. And then you kind of take that outside interference out of the equation, 'cause if you start saying, "Well you know what? Treston is a very good worker though. I hate to lose him." It's not about losing Treston. That should never enter your mind. It's, okay, what did he do and what does the policy say?

However, another interviewee said:

Being competent, being fair – excuse me, being equitable. There is a difference. For me, fair means you treat everybody the same way regardless whether they deserve it or not; equitable means you treat people based on their contribution to the effort. If I have somebody that I got to keep kicking the chair all the time to wake him up, or I have to go and call him in the morning and say, "Where are you; you're late?" I don't want to treat him like I'm going to treat my shining star because that's not fair to the shining star. And I'm not going to be treating my shining star like I supposedly should be treating him to get him up to speed. So, I would say being equitable as opposed to being fair. There are rules, don't get me wrong, I try to follow them as much as I can, but I also know that if I got a guy out here producing for me, I'm not going to yell at him for being 10 minutes late or 15 minutes late. If it gets to be a chronic thing, we're going to talk about it, but I'm not going to beat up on him. But the other guy, we have to talk a little "You don't do anything when you come on time, and now you're late?"

Communication. One of the challenges of being a Black middle manager is communicating the goals of the organization. They must determine the best way to communicate the same message to different employees. Four participants noted that the personality of the individual influenced how they needed to deliver the message to their direct reports. Respondents reported that being "flexible" and "staying connected" increased the likelihood that the employee would receive the same message they were intending to send. Staying connected was described as being "in tune" with staff

members and knowing them on an individual level. They felt that this had two primary

benefits. By knowing the personality, it enabled them to deliver messages in a way that

each staff member could best receive it. Maintaining the connection provided a basis that

allowed them to tailor their style to the individual employee. A further benefit of the

connection was that if helped when it came time to delegate tasks. Knowing the strengths

and weaknesses of direct reports was used to ensure that important tasks were given to

the staff member with the greatest likelihood of success. Two managers mentioned that

this task became increasingly more complex as they rose higher in the organization's

hierarchy. They had to package goals and directives in a way that minimized distortions

as they were sent down to employees on the front line.

The challenges that accompany managing staff only become more complex when

also considering the employees that report to the people they supervise.   As stated by

one contributor:

> I find that the biggest thing is to get my chiefs or my managers just below me to
> take accountability and responsibility for their areas and to really become
> involved with their employees and be concerned for their employees while also
> trying to get the mission accomplished. If they can't take care of their employees
> you are not going to get anything accomplished. If their employees have needs
> that are going unaddressed and unheard it is going to become an issue that
> becomes louder than the mission. That is the challenge and you need to have a
> balance.

Additional Obligations of the Role

Leadership. Black middle managers mentioned other pressures that complicated

their tasks. Being a Black middle manager seemed to imply that one had to constantly

monitor his actions. Middle managers, according to the participants, were seen as leaders

in the organization, and were thus expected to model "good corporate citizenship". Black

middle managers needed to be sure that their actions represented such. Having a

"leadership presence" was described as a critical aspect of being a middle manager, because it instilled a mindset of continually monitoring behavior. One participant detailed the experience of having to constantly monitor his actions, as they could be sending inadvertent signals to the rest of the organization. Setting an example of acceptable behavior was categorized as "being a leader" or having a "leadership presence."

Responsibility. Four Black middle managers spoke about the large sense of responsibility. As middle managers they were responsible for their direct reports in terms of their quality of work and productivity while simultaneously being responsible to the organization as a whole. The large sense of responsibility created an inextricable link between their personal goals and the company goals. One participant mentioned the reasons why the responsibility was a challenge:

> The challenges of being a manager are always trying to get things accomplished, trying to make good on the deliverables that you have for your evaluation and for the company's success. I think that's always a fluid environment. So your best laid plans don't mean too much when the situation changes. So you've got to be flexible. But that's it, accomplishing the end goal and on the other side, and trying to make sure that your subordinates are getting everything that they need from you…

Experience with Managers

Participants were asked to describe their experiences with their managers. Participants were asked in what ways if any, did the race and gender of their managers affected their careers. This question was designed to gather data about the potential impact of racial and gender group memberships on the careers of Black men in middle management. This open-ended question allowed participants the freedom to reveal the

experiences that were most salient, or that they felt had an impact. Participants were not asked to identify the race and gender of all of their managers.

However, in discussion, Black middle managers disclosed the race and gender of the managers that came to mind when they were answering the question. It is from these disclosures that the data were collected. Three participants received support from both Black and White managers. A few participants received support from both male and female managers. There was also a subset that had more positive experiences with Black managers, while another had more positive experiences with women. All participants had a White male as a manager at some point in their careers. Resultantly, White male managers were often used as a point of comparison when describing their relationships with White women, Black men, and Black women

Black Managers

Five of the participants mentioned never having a Black boss. Many of those that did mention experience with Black bosses described working relationships that were short-term or indirect reporting relationships. However, managers generally reported positive experiences with their Black managers both male and female. Positive experiences as determined by the researcher included, taking a greater interest in them, being able to connect, and "going off the record" more than White managers.

Black male managers. Two managers reported experiences with Black male managers. Neither felt that the manager had an effect on his career. One participant recalled that he only worked with the person a short period of time and the managerial relationship "did not hurt him or help him". The other respondents mirrored these sentiments stating that the relationship with his manager was "strictly professional".

However, he then discussed the financial benefits of this managerial relationship in a way that contradicted his original sentiment.

> But he and I were alike from the standpoint of being professional and as a result of that, it was strictly a professional relationship. Nothing beyond that. Nothing. I never reached out to him; he never reached out to me. It was like business as usual. He came in to do my work on succession planning, compensation, and help me staff my organization. Because he was over the business unit that we had in Switzerland. And he was creating a new workforce, and I went over and helped him recruit and hire people. But it was just all professional. Unbelievable. You know what? Hindsight is 20/20, but I wish I would have done something to change that because he's very successful within [company name]. And he was very good to me from a comp standpoint. He gave me an element of compensation that was the highest, and it's had a very good impact on me financially. But I didn't reach out to him; nor did he reach out to me. And if I were to call that guy right now, I think he would like that, and he would – if I needed him to do me a favor he would do it. But it was – the relationship I would say was something superficial because – not superficial. It's just that it didn't go beyond the fact that he was the president, and I was his HR person. And the expectation was for me to perform my HR duties to help him grow his business. And that was the extent of it.

Black female managers. The few Black middle managers that had Black female bosses did not think that they had an impact on their careers. One was an indirect reporting relationship and the other was under a woman that was temporarily filling the role. However, the interviewee with the indirect relationship did have an experience that he thought was worth discussing:

> I don't know, I mean I haven't had any, I'm trying to think when have I had an African-American boss, a direct African-American boss. I don't think I've ever had one. I've never had one. I mean, (Name) is the closest I've ever got to it, reporting to her for a short period of time and that's only because there wasn't somebody in place. I reported to of course more men than women. I think it's all about the competency and the aptitude of that individual. I think it is refreshing being able to have one on ones with her and being able to talk and being able to relate because she knows what I'm going through and she's been there before, something like that to have encouragement and mentoring. But I don't think it really has played that much. I think you realize what you have to get done and you get it done. I think if you have difficulty with managers I think it's just because they're difficult in the relationship. Now how much does my race have to do with that relationship? I'll never know. I 'm sure it has something to do with

that because it's not like they're inviting me over for dinner every day or anything like that. So I think those are the little things you miss out on that you don't know about. So no more than anything else because I've always had whites as my direct supervisors.

White Managers

All participants recalled having a White boss. Participants reported both positive and negative experiences with their White bosses; the experience with White women was seen more positively across participants.

> The interesting thing that you'll find is that I've had managers – and this is white managers, right? Who have said, well, I'm not judging you or, seeing you any differently than anybody else. And the perspective that I've had, in some cases, I said, "Well, to some degree you're being racist. Right?" And he's like, "Well, what are you talking about? I treat everybody the same." I said, "Yeah. That's the problem. You can't treat me the same as you treat John, because I have a different issue. Or I have different challenges that I need to overcome. So I need you to treat me differently, not in a sense of giving me more than what you give John, but I need you to think about how you help me do things differently." And it's just interesting insight, right? Because people look at that and say, "Well, I'm fair. I treat everybody the same as across the board." And in a lot of cases, that – you are discriminating against me, because you can't treat me the same. Because that is in a sense – not that I'm asking you to give me anything different, but you've got to treat me on a more one on one basis than me as part of a group. And so I think I found that, my White managers tend to stay on that line, because they're very conscious about that dynamic. And I found that to be very interesting, because, even in the business environment, what is said, how it's said, what – how you frame it, they're very conscious to make sure that nothing comes out that would even give an indication of being that they're someone who would view you as being different or discriminatory or anything like that.

White female managers. Seven participants mentioned White women who had a positive effect on their development as managers. One Black middle manager mentioned a negative experience, and felt his boss was incompetent. Those that responded in a positive manner characterized their relationships as being outstanding, positive, and nurturing. The reasons for the responses fell into two categories. Some felt that they were able to form and sustain better relationships with women, while others thought that

women had a positive impact on their careers[1]. Two men stated a preference for female

managers. Overtime, a mutual trust developed where the Black middle managers felt the

relationship became collegial. The dyad evolved into a beneficial source of guidance

related to work and career.

Easier to develop relationship. The intersection of race and gender seemed to impact the

ability of the participants and their managers to form relationships. Reasons it was easier

to form relationships were unclear. In both instances the Black middle managers offered

possible explanations while admitting that they did not really know.

> I've probably had a better relationship with the women than with the men. If the
> question to that is why, not exactly sure, I'm truly speculating here. It seemed like
> there's just much more of a connection with the white women where there was
> just tension it seemed like with the white males. One common denominator
> though, I'll often bring it back in with sports with the men, especially when they
> know that I played ball. They always had questions and that was always
> something to talk about. It always seemed that after that there wasn't much of a
> connection where with the women. It was just an easier conversation it seemed.
> It wasn't the same tension. I don't know if they felt that tension but I most
> certainly did. But almost every single white woman I've worked for, which has
> been three in fifteen years, seventeen years, two of them were outstanding. One
> was okay, I'd say average.

Another interviewee reported:

> I seem to get along a little better with women or - I don't know if it's just because
> I've been exposed to them more. The couple of guys who've been like
> management or whatever, I've been like, "Eh, whatever." You know, there's no - I
> can honestly say they left no real impact on me. I don't think has anything to do
> with them being men, but I learned a lot, like the guy who was here before me and
> when I was in the city, I learned a lot about what not to do as a manager, and I
> don't know if it had anything to do with being a man. But, in some instances it
> did because I saw how they treated certain people based on their sex or based on
> their race or whatever. Race I couldn't prove, sex I could see. So I learned that
> number one, I will not do some of these things, and I learned that I prefer not
> dealing with men, I prefer dealing with women.

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[1] It should be noted that subjects did not identify a particular race when specifically describing the reasons
for the positive experiences with their White female bosses, only describing them as women. However,
subjects had either already identified these women as White or disclosed the race of the managers when
asked.

Positive impact. The Black middle managers also valued the specific positive impact

White women had on their careers. They valued the compassionate and caring approach

that they felt from their White female managers. The respondents felt that the approach

these women took has had a lasting effect on them.

> I was trained by a female. She's excellent. Excellent. Dr. (Name), but I grew up
> with six sisters. That has affected me to be more compassionate and caring, be
> more sensitive going back to my grandmother and my parents and others, number
> one.

> Most of the bosses I've had have been women, and they've been very focused on
> listening, which seems so ridiculous and stereotypical, when I started thinking
> about it, but it's true. They focus on listening and development and nurturing.
> Interesting, I said, "Wow, okay, that is something I needed especially, because
> where I was coming from mentally, I needed that".

White male managers. Overall, the Black middle managers had mixed feelings

about their interactions with White male managers. The participants described having

both beneficial and problematic relationships with their White male managers. Beneficial

relationships included being a mentor and sponsoring the respondent. Some preferred not

to work for White men, while others maintained that they had both good and bad

experiences.

The biggest difficulty in reporting to White men was developing a relationship.

Black middle managers disclosed that lack of connection with White Men seemed to

impact the trajectory of their careers. Some participants eventually were able to

overcome the divide. Participants reported positive and negative experiences with regard

to their relationships and interactions with their White male managers.

Difficult to Form a relationship. Six Black middle managers reported difficulty

connecting to their White male managers in a way that did not exist with White female

managers. The reasons included tension, the way White managers treated people based on race and gender, not wanting to "be a golf or drinking buddy", getting past the "racial thing" so that they could connect in the ways men typically do.

Interviewees cited difficulty forming relationships with White men inside and outside of work. These internal and external connections became a career concern, because they believed that it was the strength of the relationship between their White peers and their managers that gave them an advantage for promotions. The relationship outside of work was reflective of the relationship in the office, in that both were difficult. One possible reason why the relationships were contentious was the presence of racial undertones. Two respondents expressed the statements below:

> And it was hard for me to develop a relationship with white male bosses outside of a work environment. And let me put that in the proper perspective. I didn't want to become their golf or drinking buddy. But our relationship is strictly professional. And to a certain extent, that could have inhibited the way things were between the two of us, because I never went beyond the work environment to reach out and say let's do something socially, nor did I invite him to my house for dinner, and nor did he do the same thing for me. But I've seen those kinds of relationships between white males grow, and as a result, have a positive impact on one's career success…. These guys, they would do things socially outside of work. So if you were a single black male professional and you didn't go to the happy hours at that time, which was recognized as an important way of socializing, then you would miss out on opportunities to get information that they would share either at the happy hour or on a golf course. And I know nothing about golf. The only time I ever played it was at a company function. But these are the types of environments where key decisions are made and where key pieces of information are shared, so it's important to look at that as well.

> The (white) male bosses that I've had, I had to get to know in kind of a different pal-around guy kind of way, which was difficult because I had to make sure that I got past the racial thing first. And so I was like, "Okay, how are we going to pal around and be guys because when we hang out and you say something ridiculous, I want to hit you with a glass?"

Overcoming the difficult relationship. At some point in their career, some managers seemed to be able to overcome the tension. The motivation seemed to come from the

thought that it will be the best thing to do for their career. There was a moment of clarity

when Black middle managers realized that not cultivating relationships with their White

male bosses was negatively impacting their careers.

> I recognized that if I'm going to be successful then I really need to develop the networks, reach out, initiate conversations, and develop a rapport so that they can look at me in a different light.

> So I'm thinking – so my first year working at (Company Name), I didn't even hang out with people outside of work, because I was thinking, "I don't know – don't know about this." And the second year, I said, "Listen, out of all these subtle, informal learning job opportunities, getting them to know you at a different level, you are screwing up your career, son. Get involved." So I changed my approach and it was much more successful. But the male – the male thing, it's really about bonding in a different kind of way, and that for me is probably been the difference, just the development focus, really ready opened to have a conversation. The other way you got to bond in a slightly different way. From a racial perspective, I've only had white women as bosses, and I've had really white men as bosses. So I think race – the white men have been more, strangely enough, open to talking about race than the white women.

Experiences with Direct Reports

White Direct Reports

Managers had a range of experiences with White employees. Some reported that

they looked at them as "just people" and noticed no difference from anyone else, while

others recalled specific ways that the relationship was impacted by race. Further, there

were also those managers who believed race impacted the relationship but still had no

problem with managing white direct reports. Two said that having white employees had

not presented any problems. One of the two participants, who stated he had not had any

issues also, reported actively working to prevent any issues from arising. Some Black

middle managers, who did have problems, still described the experience as more positive

than negative.

Participants generally reported their experience with White employees was "not difficult", "not much of an issue" or expressed positive feelings about their experience. Positive sentiments included: "cool" and "rewarding". The experience of managing White employees was also described as challenging, sometimes by the same participants that expressed positive sentiments. Other contributors also shared ways in which they treated White employees to prevent problems from arising in the future. This typically included taking action at the beginning in the working relationship to demonstrate expertise and establish themselves as a resource.

Finally, there was a particular subset that mentioned a change in the perceptions of their White employees. Initially, their employees seemed skeptical of working for a Black manager, doubting both ability to manage and competence in the related area of expertise. However, after working together participants reported their employees no longer held these views, and in fact believed them to be "good".

> So it became a challenge because at the time you were still dealing with why you're here and are you capable and qualified to manage me. But on the other hand, when they saw what you were able to do and some of the contributions that you were to make, they gained – you gain a certain level of respect, and then the relationship went more in a positive direction.

Black middle managers that did reveal challenges seemed to feel that some White employees were uncomfortable working for them. Two of the middle managers used specific qualifiers regarding the type of White employees with whom they had the most problems, "racist" White employees" and "older" White employees.

Five Black middle managers noted that there was no difference in managing White staff members. Two felt that the organizational practices were a buffer that helped reduce possible negative reactions that would have come from White staff members. One

participant said that everyone went through the same training. He also indicated that they realized that to be in his position, he must know what he was doing. The other said that it was the length of time his organization had been integrated, so having it was part of the culture.

Other styles of relating were having a collegial style, focusing on goals, and being seen as hard working but not militant. Other participants did not acknowledge a difference; they said that White subordinates were "just people". "No different" was also used when Black middle managers felt that one racial group was no different from another because there would be challenges managing anyone. Though this segment of Black middle managers mentioned that there was "no difference" all of them were able to recall a time when there was an incident with a White direct report that they felt was race related.

How White employees relate to Black male middle managers. Black middle managers reported that White employees had concerns about "having a Black boss". One participant mentioned being able to "feel the prejudice". They offered explanations as to why White employees might be concerned: some had not had much contact with Black people and never had a Black supervisor. Others felt like that was prejudice, and White employees were skeptical about the ability of a Black manager to teach them anything. Interviewees reported that some White employees gave less effort than they were capable of demonstrating. The Black middle managers were able to express this:

> I have to look at it individually. I can't look at them collectively. I've had some people that I think initially had some concern about having an African-American manager. I definitely know some of them have never had an African-American manager before.

I don't look at it as a black and white issue. I always look at it and say, "Look, you're a manager. You're not living up to the expectations that I have. You're not helping me get – you're not helping this business be better. You know, you're part of the problem. You're not part of the solution." And so I've had to let people go. I've had to fire people. But I think some of the motivation on their minds and behaviors, because it was, the color of my skin. In some cases, people still have those preconditions or things that they, in their mind, it's like, okay. I just can't get over that. You know, I just can't report to a black man, or a black woman, or a woman in some cases. But in this case, I've had people who I knew who had a problem reporting to me, and they didn't last long.

How Black male middle managers relate to White employees. Black male middle managers said that they altered their approach when working with White employees. Six participants mentioned consciously treating White employees different than from Black employees. Many of the changes in style seemed to be preventative or precautionary. This included making White employees more comfortable by reaching out more. It was also described in a way that the researcher understood to be an internal monitor or sixth sense. This was a semi-conscious system designed to gather the information necessary to protect themselves. An additional component of the monitoring system included a "filter" to use communication styles, including the vernacular, which was familiar to White employees and incorporated their world view. The protection this system allowed them to tune in to instances where the wrong decision with a White employee could result in an undesirable outcome on the job. One respondent mentioned how he dealt with White women: "…if I'm meeting with a white woman, young staff member, the door's open, and I'm going to be in the room. She'll be on this side of the desk; I'm on that side of the desk; that door's wide open…"

Further, Black middle managers seemed to respond to the unspoken stance of White employees that they needed to prove themselves and earn their respect.

So on top of that I'm black, so that brings a whole other I think level of complexity into it because when you're dealing with white people, they have to feel comfortable with you. Unfortunately we can't sit back like white managers in the same role can sit back and say, "You get comfortable with me." I can't say that. Unless I want to be behind, I have to say "how do I make you comfortable with me?" I always have to seek out individuals and connect and I think that's the biggest one, the biggest difference between black managers and white managers at the same level and having the same subordinates is that you definitely have to reach out more. I don't care what [executive] coach I've talked to, every time I get feedback, every time I get a 360, they are good but they always have that component of either you're intimidating or you need to reach out more, and become more accessible.

Evolution of the Relationship. Participants noted that the relationship with employees changed overtime. This change was reported by interviewees that directly expressed taking extra precautions when working with White employees and those that did not. Black middle managers would often receive reports from other members in the organization that their direct report was talking about how good a manager they were. The change included an increase of trust and respect. One participant stated:

…they get a chance to see those who believe that we all are Americans; they get a chance to see that. They can _____ just as well and I see the pride in their eyes, too. They've been able to tell their family or their friends, 'You know my boss is Black. You know that don't you. He's very good. He cares about people, too. He's a good man.' It has gotten back to me either in conversation or you get a chance to meet some of them and their families and they say "Look, I've got a very good friend, or my neighbor and I talk about you all the time." That type of thing.

Black Direct Reports

When describing the relationships with Black employees, Black middle managers gave a variety of responses. There were those that reported it was "good" and "fun" while others thought it was challenging. The participants who felt it was good spoke about the trust that was felt between themselves and their Black employees and the reaction they received from them. The positive reactions included "pride" and

"giddiness". Two participants described it as challenging, however many of them mentioned that one of the primary challenges of managing Black employees was that they felt as if they were owed something. Black middle managers reported incidents where Black employees expected them be less stringent regarding discipline and more lenient with performance expectations.

One unique challenge that came with managing Black employees was managing the impressions of White employees. Some participants recalled making extra attempts to "reach out" to White employees as a way of mitigating the perception that they might favor the Black members of the team.

Connection. Respondents mentioned that there was an "immediate connection" with Black staff members. This "connection" included an understanding that each would look out for the other. There was a sense of trust between Black manager and Black employee that the Black middle managers felt translated into loyalty. They also sensed the pride and excitement in their Black staff members. They recognized that Black staff were proud to see them in a position of authority in the organization and looked forward to working for them. These feelings seemed to add responsibility to the Black middle manager; it meant they could not allow themselves to fail. One participant stated, "They just had an expectation of you "Okay, you're here, you're one of us, you're in this position, do your stuff. Just don't embarrass us" kind of, that type of thing."

> The difference I have noticed when managed African-American/black colleagues is that early on there's more of an immediate connection and immediate trust. They feel as though I have your back and you have my back kind of thing.

> It has been a courageous and an encouraging thing because I can see the automatic pride in the eyes when they come in the job, number one. Number two, they don't want to see me fail because most of the time I've been the first [Black] everywhere I've been."

Leniency. Ten Black middle managers mentioned experiences with Black employees where it seemed as if they expected to be treated in a way that would give them an advantage. The type of advantage that some Black employees sought was typically leniency with quality of work. Employees seemed to think that because they were both Black they did not have to put in the same effort as they would with a White manager. In a conversation with a Black employee one middle manager said:

> … Don't get caught up in that White trap. You can jump over hoops for the White administrators, but for the brothers you can take your time? They say, "Hey man, it's all right, I'll get that to you." No, don't get it twisted. Don't get it twisted, because Thurgood Marshall said a white snake will bite you like a black snake will. I'll kick your ass until I can't see it. [Laughs] Don't get it twisted.

Black middle managers found themselves in situations where they had to let Black and White employees know that they would not give them any preferential treatment by allowing them to produce substandard work. These conversations were also a time that these middle managers reminded their Black staff members that they would need to work harder than their White counterparts if they wanted to be successful. This caused some participants inner conflict because by not giving black employees "a break" they ran the risk of not being seen as "Black".

> …You ran into situations where they felt that you owed them something because you were black. And that you should be more lenient because you are black, because you're a brother, a sister, whatever, and you should be looking out for me. And that makes it tough because if they're not capable of doing the job then you have to address that from a performance standpoint. And then the perception is that you're an Uncle Tom, and you're just like the Oreo, black on the outside, white on the inside; and therefore, you don't have anything that you can do to help me.

Treatment of Black Employees.   Black middle managers described a number of ways in which they related to their Black employees. The two most endorsed relating

styles were equal treatment, and holding their Black employees to higher expectations.

Treating Black staff equally looked like holding them accountable to the performance

standards as set forth by the company. Equal was also considered to be treating them the

same as White employees or those of other racial backgrounds.

> So the challenge was getting them to realize that because you were black doesn't mean that I'm going to favor you, but I'm going to treat you fairly, and I'm going to treat you equally, and I'm going to expect from you the same thing I would expect from your white counterpart.

> In fairness, I try to deal with them equally, and I expect you to do the work just like I expect the Caucasian or the white guy to do the work or the Asian guy to do the work. I expect you to behave. So, I don't treat them any different. I treat them the same way, and to me, it's no color, it's the person.

> Holding Black employees to a higher standard was usually done intentionally and

with the purpose of preparing them for success. Black middle managers recognized and

held the perception that Black employees throughout the organization, including

themselves, must work twice as hard in order to attain similar recognition and

opportunities as their White counterparts. This belief was also a motivating force behind

holding their Black employees to higher standards. Participants believed this was

necessary to prepare the person for future opportunities. There were those that thought

they were being more demanding as well as those that knew they expected more from

Black employees but did not think of it as such. One Black middle manager expressed

the following sentiment:

> You know, I have a higher standard; and I'll tell you right now. I have a higher standard. I want to keep my white students, my white student staff workers, and my white professionals at a certain standard. I want them to excel. I want them to do the best they can; but I'll tell you, subcon – it's not even subconscious – that's a lie. That's a lie. Because of the reality that we live in, I recognize you have to be better than to be on par; and to be a standout, you have to be perfect; and we have a lot less room for error. I'm harder, but I'm not Joe Clark hard.

Another middle manager did not see himself as being "harder" on Black employees:

> So in some cases, I think people thought I was harder on them than what they necessarily need to be, but I said, "I'm going to tell you what I – what you need to hear, because let me tell you what your brand is. And nobody else is going to tell you that. Because people may feel that you're too loud, you're too rambunctious, you just have this certain persona. Hey, you got to watch the way you talk. They're like, "What are you talking about, watch the way I talk or how I say things?" I said, "Yeah. That all matters". You might not want to think that's a qualifier, but it is." I didn't [think I was being harder on them]. No. Because I know – because I understand – and I tell them, I say, "I'm helping – I'm trying to help you. You can take it or leave it, but I'm just telling you, this is what it is." So I think sometimes black managers, they tend to want to think that we have a connection. And I'm not saying we don't, but I think, in all fairness, I think I have to be more focused on them as far as what I hold them accountable for. Not that I don't hold them – everybody accountable, but the expectations I have on how they deliver. Maybe that's maybe a better way of thinking about it. I want to see you do more. So that's what I to do and that's part of my coaching, mentoring, and helping people get to the next level in their career.

Hiring. Providing hiring opportunities to Black people was mentioned by the employees. Black middle managers expressed conscientiousness about hiring Black employees. There was a sentiment that any Black person they hired would have to be at least as qualified as the other candidates. There was an emphasis on not hiring people simply because they were Black. There was a sentiment that you could not only hire all Blacks unless they were outstanding beyond reproach.

> You can't be naïve to your surroundings where you've got five positions open and you hire four black people. Maybe two or three but you can't do four because that's just not the sample size. So you have to be smart about it unless you're so sure that those four are the best daggone [people for the job]. They better be the best daggone four you'll ever find. But then you have to be aware of your surroundings that just because you're there doesn't mean you'll have to think on a bigger picture and you just go out there and go crazy because then you lose your credibility and that's what they want you to do. So you still have to think smart and put people in certain positions.

> I think it's important that minorities, African-Americans, black people, call it what you want, are in positions of hiring. Those are the individuals who are going to bring people in. I don't think it's any secret that you usually stay close to what you look like, feel comfortable with, and so on. So if there aren't people

like me or who look like me in these positions then there's probably not going to be too many people who look like me following me in these positions. It's just nature, as much as you might try to make diversity programs and have initiatives. At the end, you want to go from having to put people in front of you to them saying, "Here," and including people and bringing them forward. So it's a different feeling I think in recruiting when you can actually bring people to the table rather than pushing people in front of people and saying, "Here look at these individuals."

Black Men In The Organization

Black male middle managers were asked a series of questions designed to better understand (1) how they relate to other Black men in the organization, (2) what it meant to be a Black man in the organization and (3) how Black male middle managers understand race relations in their organizations.

Relating to Black Men In General

Having described how they relate to other Black men in the organization, 10 participants responded in ways that the researcher considered to be positive. Typical responses included "well", "good" and "great". They described the connection in this way because of the shared experiences and sense of brotherhood. For some participants it seemed to feel like it was natural.

Connection

When discussing their relationships with other Black men in the organization 10 responded in ways that described the connection as positive. Typical responses included "well", "easily" and "great". They described the connection in this way because of the shared experiences and sense of brotherhood. One participant described it as "Quite well; again, there's almost like a fraternity when you see African-Americans in the organization." For some participants it seemed to feel like it was natural. "There's that

inherent you want to trust them more, that you can have some type of camaraderie with them more." and "...I'm pretty cordial, and I'll speak to people, whether they're black or white or whatever, but then I would probably have more of an inclination to want to get to know the black males."

Non-verbal. This connection did not always need to be verbalized. The Black middle managers mentioned seeing another Black man in passing and acknowledging them. These gestures included a nod, eye-contact, or a smile. The signals held multiple meanings and were usually exchanged when walking through the organization. If it was not convenient to stop and talk, the non-verbal indicator could be an acknowledgement of the connection between Black men, as sense that "we are 'brothers'". It also created a silent understanding that the two men would have a conversation at a later date[2].

> It's kind of like your first stay and you're walking down the hall and you see someone, a certain eye contact happens in more than half of those situations and you're like, "Okay we'll get a chance and sit down and we'll talk."

> We relate, we understand that there's a, "You're my brother, and I may not be able to engage you, but I'll give you a nod, and I'll acknowledge my brother. And I will try to elicit you operating in a standard so that if I need to cover you, I will. On the same token, you're in the trenches, the eyes and ears."

Across organizational groups. The connection seemed to operate across organizational group memberships, including level in the hierarchy and department. Race seemed to have provided a level of comfort that allowed them to have a "normal relationship" and "real conversation." The following quotations are from participants who described their relationship with other Black men in the organization:

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[2] The concept of "Africanity" is raised by Wells (Gillette and McCollom, 1995) in his writing about the group as a whole. Africanity suggests that Black people are connected by an unspoken force as a function of our "being-black-in-the-world."

The majority of the black men that I deal with seem to be at central office, and they do have those few positions of power, directors and stuff like that, and it's good. I have to say, I haven't had, like, bad experiences or relationships with anyone to date….Like one thing that people say to me all the time is, like on the 25th floor here, it's our regional office, they'll say, and people who I knew coming up or whatever, they say, "You act," and this always baffles me, you know? "Oh, you're talking to us," and this and that, and I'm like, "What?" And it's like, "Well, nobody, somebody like at your grade level, they don't give us the time of day." I was like, "Well, I know you and I've known you since whatever, what's the problem?" Quite frankly, I don't necessarily like schmoozing with the other, whatever, muckety-muck or whatever, I like people working', I like a real conversation. But I've heard that a lot, so even when I deal with the other black men who are at central office or whatever, we talk business and stuff like that, but I also talk, like real life stuff, like your favorite team and stuff like that. And I find that they do it as well, they return it, they welcome the opportunity to do that, so, I don't know…

Well, I mean the relationship would be the same as if I'm not a vice president or not a manager. I went out with them and talked to them certainly as if I was just one of them. You know, just a colleague. I mean, if it was something dealing with a management problem or something, of course that's a little different. Otherwise, it was certainly what I would call a normal relationship.

Desire to connect

The Black male middle managers had an interest in connecting with one another. If they did not feel like they were able to connect to other Black men, it was "depressing", disappointing, and hurtful. At times, it was the dearth of Black men in the organization. Middle managers also recalled instances where what the other Black man felt about race could affect the ability to connect. There was a desire to eliminate what ever structure or disposition that might have kept them apart:

There needs to be a campus organization and structure where we're supporting one another, instead of allowing a process or an institution to segregate us like a plantation. And I'm talking about across the line, no matter what someone's preference is, what someone's religion is, or someone's educational discipline is. You know I'm talking about, brother, that's the bottom line. But we've got to come together and understand and support each other and let us be the first one to rebuke each other.

You don't want to get me started on this one, but for the most part there's only a few that I come in contact with on my level, and I think that's one of the disappointments. And not that (Company Name) doesn't have them, but in the division I'm in, in the business unit I'm in I tell my wife quite often I mean that's a depressing thing. You'll see that I'll go to a leadership meeting with several hundred people and there's a handful, a sprinkling here and there. That's depressing. I'll be upfront with anybody. I'm not the smartest cookie in the cookie jar. So I know that there are people that can do what I'm doing and do more than I'm doing, that corporate America still, for the most part, and even in terms of other Blacks in other industries out there, they still are reluctant about putting Blacks in the higher positions. That's just my personal opinion, kind of what I see as I'm walking into these different places with a couple hundred people and there's seven or eight of us in there. It's just like, "Okay, something's wrong with this picture."

Relating to Black Men Higher Up

Black middle managers described few differences between them and the Black men higher up in the organization. Eight participants felt that there was little to no difference between them and the Black men higher up. Two respondents did not have any Black men who were higher up than they were in the organization. Three interviewees had only one Black man above them in the hierarchy and three others only identified two Black men in higher positions.

The participants mentioned that it was difficult to draw comparisons because of the small numbers, noting that they were "individuals" and it was "hard to paint with a broad brush." Interpersonal skills, planning and productivity were highlighted by Black middle managers as areas of similarity among themselves and Black men higher up in the organization. Interpersonal skills included communication skills and presentation skills. Communicating was seen as particularly important because it allowed participants and their Black higher ups the "ability to talk to anyone". Participants also saw themselves sharing an ability to plan methodically and produce high quality results as other similarities with more senior Black men in the organization.

Never forgetting Blackness

A particular subset mentioned similarities connected to being Black. This was demonstrated by continuing to involve themselves in Black issues within the organization, by engaging with other Black people, and by working to change the culture of the organization. Being connected also meant having the ability to trust and relate to them. Mentoring other Black employees was another way that Black middle managers maintained their connectedness. One of the middle managers recalled one individual that "never forgot his Blackness". As described by the participant, this individual "waved the banner on behalf of the Blacks within (Company name). And he reached out to some of the resources that were White males that he thought could help facilitate a change." Others mirrored this sentiment:

> We're altruistic in many senses; we want to do for the common good, as statesmen. And we're committed to the community, and we're committed to our folk. We're committed to our people, just as we are committed with everyone else, but we're committed to our people. That's the bottom line.

Disconnected

The major difference that the Black middle managers made note of was that some of the Black men higher up in the organization were not as connected to Black people in the rest of the organization as they might be. Some thought that these men did not consider themselves Black, and may have even wanted to be White. Others were thought to be aware of their Blackness, but not connected to it in a way that motivated them to reach out to other Black people in the organization. Being disconnected had a physical and psychological connotation. The physical disconnectedness seemed to result from the absence of Black men in the organization or at their level in their organization. The psychological disconnect was confirmed when individuals associated with White

members of the organization purposefully avoided Black colleagues as if they did not

share the "Black" experience. Beyond the avoidance, disconnected Black men higher up

"were less supportive of issues that affected Black people". The following quotations

provide examples of Black men in the organization who were seen as not being

connected to being Black.

> This one black male in particular, he was very much removed from the real world, so to speak, because he was at a very high level, and he's even gone higher since then. But he didn't have a pulse on what was happening to others within the organization, particular blacks as well. And I don't think he really saw himself as White, he recognized that he was black. He didn't abandon his blackness, but he didn't do much to reach out to folks beyond him. It didn't bother me because I recognize that people are quite different, and I didn't want to create a real expectation for him because he's a human being as well. Because he's black doesn't mean he has to reach out to others. So it didn't – this didn't impact him one way or the other.

> There were some who were White and then you couldn't really relate to them. They tended to carry themselves in that way, and I am not [like that]. And then there were others that were totally different, they were almost like "well, I came from where you came from" so lets get together. I could name a couple guys that I just couldn't, relate to them. In fact, they probably didn't want to because that would probably show that they are, so called "White" to their colleagues. And they tended to really carry themselves in just that way. They have that part in them and as a guy said, that's what you have to do if you want to get to the upper echelons. And maybe there is some that decided, that's what I'm going to do because I want to be in those upper echelons. So I definitely ran into, people like that and you just didn't feel like you were with them. And others you could just tell right away, we are from the same place.

It was also acknowledged that a psychological disconnect was perceived when

individuals recognized they were Black yet still chose not to remain connected as

evidenced by their lack of support for "Black issues". One's "political situation" in the

organization, fatigue from the support of Black issues over time and perceptions of

others, and level in the organizational hierarchy are all possible reasons why Black men

closer to the top of organizations might disengage or be perceived as disengaged.

Mr. Smith, you saw a lot of him, but Mr. Smith was promoting himself. He had his sights on where he wanted to go in the organization, and he was going for that. I have no problem with that at all. Some people because of how they saw themselves were supportive of issues or were less supportive of issues that affected blacks because of how they saw what their political situation was.

Whereas participants describing Black men in the previous quotation questioned the degree of connection the Black men higher up felt to being Black, it was also proposed that a person can appear disconnected, yet still be advancing the cause of Black people. Their senior level position in the organization was thought to impact the way in which they were able to advocate for "Black issues"

Well, I look up now; and sometimes I see, Black administrators above me; and they seem to – at times, they seem, to me, to be a little disconnected. It looks like they're not cognizant of some things that I want them to speak out on. But when you have opportunities to speak with them on a one-on-one basis, they still get it. They are there; and they remind you to, "remember." They're like, "I still remember. I see a larger picture. So I have to dance a little bit differently. "

Race Relations in Their Organizations

Participants were asked how they understood race relations in their organization. Not all Black middle managers felt they were able to answer this question. Some respondents indicated that had not thought about how race might influence how their organization operated. Other respondents provided answers indicating that the impact of race had changed and is changing. This sentiment was described in a generally positive way, with the exception of the changing meaning of diversity. Generally, Black middle managers felt that race relations needed to continue to improve, because there were still "costs" that accompanied being Black in the organization. Some middle managers disclosed their experience with confronting situations that related to race. Only one thought race relations were very good and had no impact.

Avoid Thinking about Race

Three respondents said they did not think about race relations in the organization. Thinking about race in the organization was something that these middle managers stated was out of their awareness. For the Black middle managers this was both a personal decision, and a result of the way race relations have changed. Participants were asked about how they understood race relations, and for some it seemed to be easier to avoid thinking about it.

Despite the tendency to avoid, it was clear that not thinking about it took energy. It seemed that one Black middle manager in particular was conflicted about his feelings of working to avoid it. This participant said that he found out about incidents that might have been racially charged by talking to people and then said he does not spend much time at the water cooler. He went on to say that he did not think avoidance was the best way to deal with things, yet admitted that he was at the point where he avoided some of the racial concerns intentionally.

> Talking to people, because a lot of it, again, a lot of things like that happen without me noticing it and I'm sure by now it's intentional, not that I believe in putting my head in the sand. If something is blatant then most certainly I will step in and do something about it. But I tend not to be at the water cooler. I tend to believe that people are working in their best interest but not necessarily trying to bring someone down to do so. But also I'm not naïve either.

Another respondent felt that he had "so many other pressures" that it would be disadvantageous to spend time thinking about whether something happened because he was Black. He would lose time considering the other organizational responsibilities he had. The participants were not alone in their avoidance of thinking about race, they also recalled instances where White colleagues told them that they did not see race.

Things are Changing

Seven Black middle managers talked about their organizations changing and noted that they have made progress. Reasons for the change included the "old boy network" retiring and the civil rights movement. Seven participants also agreed that racism is much more subtle than previously encountered but their companies still needed to continue improving the diversity initiatives, especially at the senior management level.

Absence of Blacks in Senior Management

The lack of Black people in senior leadership positions sent a message to the organization about the level of achievement to which they could aspire. The message was perceived as being held by the organization as a whole and was also expressed in the way that the participants spoke about the levels they could reach.

> …we don't have a footprint; we don't have any sort of identity. You know, there's no preconceived notion of what we can do here, because no one's done it. …most of the African-Americans, particularly, that they interact with are in lower positions and not as high performing. And I've seen it in a couple of our big sites. And I say, "Is this a selection issue, or is it a development issue?" And I think we need to get behind it and let me be in this role for a little while, and I will. So I told them, "It's great that you described the issue, now let's do something with it, because I don't buy that."

> They definitely have set an example where there is an opportunity to succeed. There was a time when I first came in as director, I was the highest ranking black person in the United States and then that quickly changed because Bob became director and then of course when (Black man) and (Black woman) came in as (VPs) it was whole different story– … So I think that in itself said a lot about what this company or at least this affiliate, what diversity means to them in the face of the customer. Now as far as (Company Name) as a whole, come on, it's a (country) company and they're very, very homogeneous. So I'm not fooled in that sense. I don't think I'll ever be sitting at the exec table as chairman. There will be (individuals from that country) on the board but I doubt if I'll ever run the organization. What's the highest I could ever aspire to? If I got to be president of the United States affiliate, that'd be great.

Meaning of Being a Black Man in this Organization

Being a Black man in the organization had both positive and negative associations. The middle managers spoke about the sense of achievement that they had attained their respective positions and persevered during the challenging times. For some these positions came with a responsibility to the Black community and to help lift others up. The Black male middle managers also acknowledged the lonely feeling of being the only Black man in the room. Participants also reported interactions with other members of the organization that conveyed the message that the Black men did not "belong" and they needed to "prove themselves". They were held to higher standards and often more was expected of them.

Only One in the Room

Nine Black middle managers mentioned that being a Black man in the organization was a solitary position. They were quick to acknowledge that there were very few at their level and they were a "real minority". There was a sense of loneliness that accompanied their positions and many could relate to being the "only one in the room".

> It means that you are a real minority, because there are not a lot over here. It means that when you move they all watch. It means that someone is saying, "Why is he here? What does that mean?" It means a lot. We have a process at this institution that has not opened the doors for men of color, anyone of color. There's been a study done several years ago, I wish I could find it for you, and the term was used "Look who's missing." Look who's missing. Look who's missing in the faculty ranks, look who's missing in the administrative ranks, and look who is missing.

> Sometimes I felt like I was by myself and I didn't have a resource that I could go to, to vent, depending upon where I was in my career. In some of the past jobs, there were other black males that I kind of respected and did go to and talk to. But in most instances I was the one that people were coming to because I was in HR. And they felt that because you were in human resources that you had – you were the type of person that had a fair and objective opinion on issues and they

could come and sound off on you. But on the other hand, there were not too many people that I could go to.

Different and Higher Standard

Black male middle managers felt they were held to a different standard than their white counterparts. There was a sense that they had to prove themselves by performing at levels far beyond what was expected of their peers. This was called the "Black Tax". Accompanying the implied necessity to overachieve and prove oneself was the feeling that they were "under a microscope". This was the feeling that other members of the organization were watching to see if they would handle situations as effectively as their White counterparts.

> Studies have shown and proved, and I know that there still remains in America a Black tax…Work extra hard, be extra smart. Work harder, be smarter, come in earlier, leave later, and always expect to be second-guessed. Hands down, it's a Black tax. It's a Black tax.

This sense of having to do more contributed to the sense one participant had that being Black in organizations was a "heavy burden".

> It carries a heavy burden, just like in any other organizations. It carries a heavy burden because you have to be better than to be on par; and to be a standout, you have to be damn near perfect. I could look across the table; and I could say this with full honesty; and I'll be prepared to debate this. I know it'll be an ugly debate; and it'd be tense and awkward; but from my time in management positions, my white peers get away with a lot more. Like the stuff that they do, I would be called to the carpet on; and the stuff that they don't do. I don't think we have that luxury. I really don't. I really don't.

For some, the sense that they had to prove themselves was based on internal messages as well as those coming from the organization.

> I'm very sensitive about the lazy, shiftless stereotype, so I probably ended up working harder than most, definitely here to overcompensate for that. That bothers me. You have two people, one white, one Black doing' the same amount of work or whatever and/or same amount of not work but, the White person could afford to not do the work, and to me, the White person can because they're stuck

with that label. And, really, in a perfect world, I would like to be able to not work just as much as someone else not working'? But I feel like I can't, and that might just be my own thing, but I just feel like I can't.

Sense of Achievement

Six middle managers also mentioned the sense of personal achievement that they felt. There was a sense of accomplishment that they reached the level that they did. Black middle managers drew the sense of achievement from knowing that they worked hard and overcame obstacles in their path.

How participants experienced the interview

Participants seemed to enjoy the interviews. Many of them expressed that it felt good to have an opportunity to reflect on their careers. One respondent said he actually "became kind of emotional" because he did not often have the opportunity to reflect on his entire career and think about the amount of progress he made. It was also a positive experience because they were able to share thoughts that they usually keep inside. Those that do not keep them inside try to push them out of awareness. After intentionally pushing memories away, one interviewee found it difficult to recall his more challenging career experiences. This Black middle manager anticipated that he would regret not telling me something that he did not think of during the interview. Toward the end of the interview he said:

> Even just sitting here, I would probably go back to where you were asking me about one of the more difficult times I had in my career and man there was a very difficult times. I just totally forgot about it because I try to block those things out and try to concentrate on what's going forward, not what's behind me. I've had some struggles maybe that would have helped me.

Interviewees also found it gratifying that they were able to help the researcher with his dissertation. They were glad to help the researcher and also hoped that their

words would be beneficial to other Black men. The men felt as if the researcher listened to them. Participants referenced the interviewer's skills as an active listener, "tone of voice" and "attentiveness".

The interview was described as "thought provoking". Participants were able to understand things differently at present than they did at the time of the events. As they spoke about their experiences, they were able to think about what really influenced their careers. The participants also valued the concept of the research, some took solace in knowing that someone was interested in the experience of Black men in management. Black middle managers directly expressed that they were glad they had the opportunity to meet the researcher. In the opinion of the researcher, it seemed they enjoyed just being able to sit and talk to another Black man. The researcher certainly enjoyed the time spent with the participants. Lastly, contributors felt they benefited from having time to think. Most of them were typically so busy that they rarely had time to think deeply about themselves in a reflective way.

Suggestions for future Black managers

This section reflects the themes that were common across all of the men that were asked about suggestions they had for future black men aspiring to management positions. Developing a realistic perspective of your skills and ability was stressed by the Black middle managers. Participants advised others to start developing relevant job skills early in their careers. There was a focus on development, some stated, "never stop learning" and "continue developing your skills".

Find a mentor. There was a need expressed for a black mentor that had accomplished what the protégé was trying to accomplish. It was also acknowledged that

the mentor did not need to be Black as long as they cared about the success of the individuals. Mentors of other races were also important as they could tell you about the culture of the company. The Black middle managers also highlighted the importance of having a group of people with whom you exchange ideas, receive feedback, help you make career decisions, and talk to about the day-to-day events of organizational life.

Networking was emphasized, including a focus on building relationships with people of all racial backgrounds was deemed critical to future advancement. "Politicking" was also important. This was different from networking. It seems that "politicking" placed more of a focused on developing relationships with the power brokers in an organization them and knowing with whom they have relationships and the nature of those relationships. Related to this was staying "aware of your environment", this was referenced in terms of organizational politics and the greater business environment within and beyond their specific industry.

Do not let race stop you! This included not limiting yourself, setting high goals, and then pursuing them in a determined way. The willingness to work hard and let your interest in advancement be known, was also accentuated. Though racism may be encountered, the participants suggested, "You can work past it" and "Ignore it if you have to". Assume positive intent until you are undoubtedly sure that you are encountering a racist person. Building relationships with other black people in the organization was highly recommended.   Black male middle managers further advised, "Being yourself" and "embracing your Blackness," encouraging future Black managers to draw upon their Blackness as a source of strength.

* Appendix E contains the suggestions of all 23 Black men in this study.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This research set out to learn about the experiences of Black men as managers-of-managers by using an approach that considered people in organizations as concurrent members of multiple groups while also giving attention to the context in which they exist. Participants shared their experience as middle managers, Black, men, Black men, and Black men in middle management. Themes emerged that transcend interactions that occurred within the boundaries of an organization and included being Black in the United States.

Essentially, these men endeavored consistently to outperform their peers in an effort to continuously advance the goals of the organization and attain positions of increasing responsibility in the institution. At the same time, Black male middle managers in this study also recognized the importance of developing relationships with individuals above them in the hierarchy, usually White men and women, while remaining connected to Black people throughout the system. The participants felt the responsibility to create opportunities for Black people by direct action including confronting bias, and indirectly through demonstrating superior performance.

This chapter will utilize embedded intergroup relations theory to understand these findings as they were described by the participants. These multi-dimensional events will be examined as intergroup events and will concentrate on the impact of organizational and identity group memberships. The primary characteristics of intergroup relations include, group boundaries, power differences, affective patterns, cognitive formations and leadership behavior. These dimensions will be applied in an effort to conceptualize the major findings of the research. The final section of this chapter will address the limitations and implications of the research as well as the researcher's experience conducting the study.

Major Findings

The effect of being a middle manager on Black men & how Black men shape the role of middle manager

The men in this study revealed that Black male middle managers felt as if they had to perform better that their White peers if they were to have a chance to succeed. Prior to becoming middle managers, many were driven to perform well academically by internal motivation to succeed and parents that were focused on education. Male role models, specifically fathers, set the standard for work ethic and how people should be treated. These lessons were incorporated into the management styles of these men. A developmental relationship with a manager often provided promotions or prepared the participants in ways that increased their chances of advancing in the organization. The preparation included exposure to the inner workings of the organization while they were still relatively junior, increasing their visibility to senior management, and giving them

authority to make "big decisions." These relationships also provided moral support that instilled confidence in the contributors and assisted them when dealing with obstacles.

Though the relationship with certain managers had a large career impact, Black middle managers also acknowledged the significance of establishing relationships with other Black people in the organization. These relationships provided a different type of support that not only included career oriented support, but also provided a sense of belonging that allowed the men to be "themselves" in a way that included their blackness. However, in their positions, these Black middle managers did not have as much interaction with other Black people as they would have liked. There existed a desire to help Black people in a way that would not send the message that they were favoring them.

At the same time, Black people in the organization, wanted and expected their help. The "help" that some Black people wanted was experienced by the managers as a desire to do less work or perform at a lower level than they would for a White manager. Essentially, Black employees wanted and sometimes expected a break from their Black middle managers. The participants rejected this notion. Some claimed that they treated Black employees "fairly", which meant the same way they dealt with White employees. Others declared that they held Blacks to a higher standard because Blacks, themselves included, had to pay the "black tax". The respondents noted that the connection they had with the Black employees was immediate and building a relationship took time, extra effort, or both.

As Black middle managers, these men dealt with performance issues, hiring decisions, communicating goals and motivating their staff. Some acknowledged that race

played a role in all of these areas, while others claimed that race was not a factor. In the opinion of the researcher, race was always a factor because the Black middle managers that reported not letting race influence their decisions had to consciously try to avoid thinking about race. In addition to the obligations to their staff, the middle managers felt the responsibility for the part of the organization that was within their control and the organization as whole. They recognized that in their positions they needed to set an example for the type of behavior employees throughout the organization should emulate. Accompanying this was the feeling of being watched because people wanted to see if they would perform as well as a White male would in the role. These tasks and pressures were considered some of the challenges of being a Black middle manager. Added to the pressures listed above, was the weight of having to succeed on behalf of all Black people. Participants felt like their mistakes could mean that other Black people would have greater difficulty reaching a similar level in the institution.

Cross Race & Cross Gender Developmental Relationships

Five of the participants stated that the person who had the biggest impact on their career was a white female manager. Of the 14 Black middle managers that listed a manager as having a significant positive impact, six were White men and five were White women. This finding is inconsistent with previous research. There was only one more White man than White women. These professional pairings that crossed both race and gender seemed mutually beneficial. The female managers in many cases played a role in hiring them into the company and then later promoting them into management. These managers also provided developmental experiences that prepared the participants for their

future assignments. Further, these relationships were absent of the type of tension that existed with White men.

Black male middle managers reported that the relationships evolved to a point where there was a high level of trust and a feeling of collegiality.   In many cases these men became trusted advisors and would be promoted by the White female as she progressed through the organizational hierarchy. The researcher surmised that the female managers also benefited; by promoting their subordinates, individual female managers were also ensuring that they would receive outstanding work. There was another hidden benefit that was observed by the researcher, the Black men became a buffer. Participants recalled instances where their white male peers would not be supportive of the White female boss. Through their work ethic and drive to exceed expectations, the Black men compensated for times when White peers may not have done their part. Further, a promising White male was more likely to be promoted than an equally promising Black male. Thus by keeping the Black middle manager one level below her, the Black men may have served as a barrier by insulating their manager from White males that could possibly replace the White female. This was another way the Black middle managers found themselves in a "middle position" (Oshry, 1994).

It is also possible that as the women advanced in the organization they experienced sexism from the White men that were in power. The Black male middle managers may have been allies that they joined with to position themselves to jointly attain more powerful positions in the organization. This may have helped reduce the tension that existed between the White women and Black men. "A series of cooperative activities toward super ordinate goals has a cumulative effect in reducing intergroup

hostility (Sherif & Sherif, 1969, p.261)." In addition, the classification of "women and minorities" and the implications that followed may have also contributed to the tightening of the boundary of that group.

Despite having relationships with White women that accelerated their careers, the difficulty forming relationships with White men was still seen as a career impediment. White men continue to disproportionately hold positions of power across organizations. Over time the Black middle managers realized that building connections to their White male bosses would assist them in rising though the corporate ranks.

Establishing Informal Authority with White Staff Members

This research showed that the Black middle managers also had to manage the impressions of the White employees they supervised. When a White employee first began working for a Black middle manager there was an initial skepticism reported by some of the participants. There was uncertainty about what it would be like to work for a Black manager and the interviewees experienced White subordinates as doubting their qualifications or knowledge of the field. Some White employees would not work as hard, others would seek out other people in the organization to confirm that what their Black boss was telling them was correct. There were typically two strategies to improve the relationship. The first involved actively reaching out early in the assignment to establish credibility and make the White employee comfortable. The second option involved the Black middle manager letting the quality of their work and effectiveness as a manager speak for itself, with confidence that over time the employee would be influenced by the manager's ability.

Participants found that overtime the relationship would often change and the initial tension would be reduced. The managers seemed to be talking about the process of becoming authorized to manage their White employees. Leach (1995) presents the concepts of formal authority and informal authority. With formal authority one has been put into a position of power and "authorized" to perform a certain task. "Establishing informal authority requires the legitimizing of "expert power" and "referent power." Expert power is the capacity to influence others because of one's knowledge, and referent power is the capacity to influence others because of one's personal characteristics (Gillette & McCollom, 1995, p. 297). The experience of Black middle managers seems to be that though they entered positions with formal authority, it was not until they proved that they were able to teach the White employee that the relationship changed. "Competent behavior" is described as central to establishing informal authority (Gillette & McCollom, 1995).

The participants believed that the experience of informal authority was not the same for their White peers upon entering a new role. This may be the result of both how Black men are viewed as demonstrated by their positions in the organization and the history between Black and Whites in this country. In most predominately White organizations, Black men do not hold positions of power. There may be some dissonance on the part of the White employee that now has a Black man as a supervisor as a result of the affective patterns and cognitive formations that are conjured up during interactions with Black and White employees.

Desire to Connect / Dual Loneliness

The Black men in this study expressed a desire for greater connectedness with other Black men. Their position in the organization was accompanied by an absence of contact with men that shared their racial group membership. There were a myriad of factors contributing to these feelings: the lack of Black men in the organization, fewer Black men on their organizational level, and the Black men that were in the company did not always externally identify with being Black. Possibly, the loneliness of being the "only one in the room" regarding their racial identity was exacerbated by occupying a middle management position. As employees progress up the organizational hierarchy, their number of peers decreases as does the amount of contact they have with each other (Oshry, 1999). Time is primarily spent communicating with or negotiating on behalf of those above and below in the organization, thus producing the condition of "middleness" (Oshry, 1994). The author proposes that being a Black male in middle management results in a 'dual loneliness' that intensifies the desire to be connected to a group. The dual loneliness is the result of the lack of contact with other Black people in conjunction with the isolation from and competition with other middle managers in the organization.

Obligation to Help

Beyond the desire to be connected, there existed in many of Black middle managers a sense of responsibility to help other Black people. Though they felt they were able to do this, it was not to their level of satisfaction and was limited by a concern regarding how it would be perceived in the organization. Black middle managers had to continually manage the impression of how they would be viewed in the organization if it seemed that they were giving Black people preferential treatment. The primary way that respondents reported they helped Black people was hiring. Participants used race as a

compensatory factor regarding an open position. If the department were lacking Black employees then it was deemed acceptable to hire a Black person, provided they were as qualified as other applicants. This seemed to have a limit, as the Black middle managers were hesitant to hire what would be perceived as "too many" Black people. The fear was that their credibility might be questioned.

The authority to make hiring decisions and the power to control resources caused internal conflict. The participants could not use them in a way that would have been most satisfying to their Black sense of self. The Black middle managers did have the ability to help other Black members of the organization in some ways that could be kept secret. However, should the secret ever be revealed, they would be known in the organization as giving Blacks an unfair advantage. This increased the risk for Black middle managers because outwardly supporting Black employees would be in conflict with the culture of a predominately White organization.

Black Tax

It has been well documented that Black managers feel the need to overachieve in the "succeed" in organizations (Dickens & Dickens, 1991). To that end, it is also shown to be true that the Black men that do advance in organizations have proven themselves in ways that are beyond that of their White peers. The "black tax" is the concept that a Black person has to work twice as hard as a White person to gain the same level of recognition and compensation within the work environment. Black male middle managers in this study paid and collected the "Black tax". There was often a contradiction between the messages that the participants sent. They all claimed that they would not give a Black person any more leeway than anyone else; however they did want

to help, which would often conflict with equal treatment. In the author's opinion, this did not acknowledge that they face challenges that are different from those of their White counterparts, thus ignoring a part of their experience that could be effecting how their performance and behaviors are perceived by other members of the organization.

It could also be argued, based on the data, that being treated harshly was equally a "Black" pattern of interaction as it was "White". In Boyd-Franklin's (2003) *Black Families in Therapy*, the author cites multiple studies where Black parents considered "strictness" necessary to ensure the success of their children. Given that Black middle managers found the relationship with Black staff members similar to "having kids", it is also possible that they treated them as they would their own children or as they were treated as children. They seemed to genuinely want junior Black employees to succeed. This may also speak to the connection that just as parents share in the success of their children, the participants also enjoyed the achievements of their Black staff.

A parallel process may also be in effect in Black middle managers' interactions with their Black employees (Alderfer, 2004). It is also possible that theses middle managers spent a lot of time in their organizations and had begun to adopt some of the patterns of interaction of which they were usually on the receiving end. One participant described this phenomenon directly "… they know that I have to perform three or four times better and I expect them to do the same. They know that and I'm not going to allow them to slack..."   The parallel process also extends to the Black middle managers that reported being "fair" to their Black staff members, with fair meaning the same way that they treat other White employees. If they treated Black employees the same way as Whites, they would essentially be doing the same thing that was done to them and

ignoring the factor of race. However, they all did acknowledge race because they

acknowledged the "connection" when working with Black employees.

Expressed Racial Identity

For Black male middle managers in a predominately White organization, the

tension seemed to exist between advancing in the organization and externally

demonstrating their Black racial identity. The higher the black men advanced in the

organization, the more difficult it seemed to stay connected to "blackness".   In fact, the

primary difference and similarity between Black men higher than them in the

organization was whether or not this individual was connected to other Black people in

the organization. While being disconnected from Black people was dissatisfying, it was

damaging to one's career if they were not able to establish relationships with the White

men in upper management.

The participants found it necessary to behave in ways that would make the White

employees above and below them comfortable and confident in their abilities.

Consequently, Black male middle mangers adopted behaviors that the researcher has

determined to be an "incongruent" expressed racial identity. Expressed racial identity

includes "an individual's words, actions and mannerisms that convey certain beliefs or

expectancies about his or her race (O'Quinn, 2006)." The researcher used the findings of

the study and the way Blackness was described as the basis for the incongruent and

congruent expressed Black racial identity. An incongruent expressed Black racial

identity included displaying thoughts and behaviors stereotypically demonstrated by

White people. This included, not reaching out and establishing relationships with Black

people, socializing mainly with White employees, minimizing the impact of race on

decision making, and making changes in language or demeanor in a way that would be more familiar to Whites.

Congruent expressed Black racial identity includes acknowledging that Black people are connected. This can be demonstrated by acknowledging Black people throughout the organization when seen in passing. Further, establishing relationships with them and supporting "Black issues". Supporting Black issues includes, creating opportunities for other minorities in public and/or private ways.

The Black middle managers faced pressure from the organization to move toward an incongruent expression, if they wanted the opportunity to advance along side with their White peers. Yet, to maintain their connection to Black coworkers they must not abandon the factors related to a congruent expressed Black racial identity. Figure 1 represents the rate of career growth as it relates to external racial identity.

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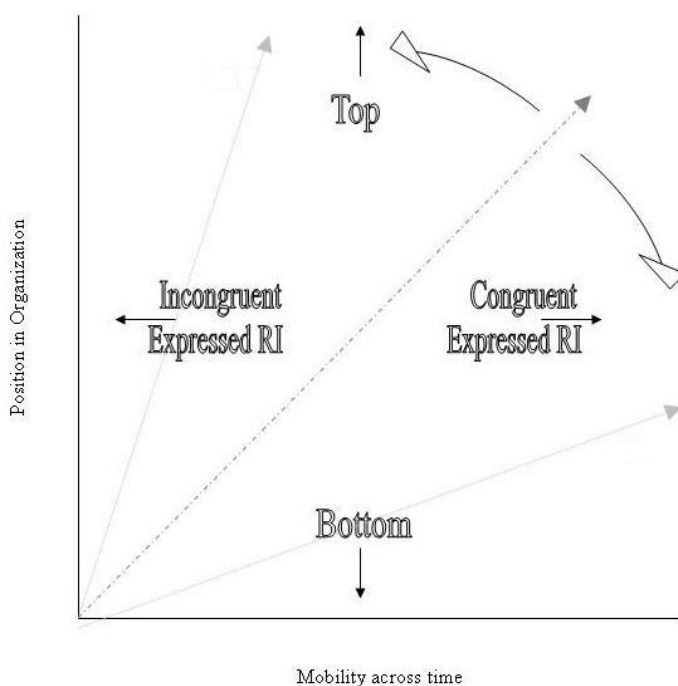
[3] This model is based on dynamics that exist in predominately White organizations that are embedded in a setting where Whites have more positions of power and authority. There is also an

Figure 1. Incongruent/Congruent expressed Black racial identity

The more a Black middle manager demonstrated an incongruent expressed Black racial identity the faster they would progress in the organization. The resemblance to Whiteness would make White people and Men more comfortable as there was less perceived difference. However, the participants deliberately sought out ways to demonstrate a congruent expressed racial identity.

The key word in the definition of expressed racial identity requires an interaction with another person or people. Embedded intergroup relations theory would propose that how the Black middle managers expressed their Black racial identity depended on the group with which they were interacting and the content of the interaction (Alderfer, 1987). With White members of the organization, the Black middle manager might display more incongruent expressed racial identity than with Black members. However, the nature of the interaction must also be considered; there are times when it could be beneficial for them to have a congruent expressed racial identity. If the organization has the opportunity to engage in a beneficial business relationship with Black customers, then it would be beneficial for Black middle managers to be more congruent, i.e. acknowledge that all Black people are connected. This model is only one factor impacting the rate of one's career growth. A developmental relationship can have an impact on a person's career trajectory in a way that would not line up with this model. The graph is to provide a visual depiction of the two worlds in which the Black male middle manager operates.

Acknowledging the "connection" to Black people was paramount to being perceived by other Black people in the organization as accepting one's Blackness.

assumption that the Black male middle manager wants the opportunity to advance in the organizational hierarchy at the rate equal to their White peers.

Though the graph might seem to indicate that the only way to rapidly advance in the organization is by adopting White organizational values, this is not necessarily the case. Hence the term "dance" that one participant used, recognizing that one is "performing" is another indicator that one is connected to their Blackness or internal racial identity. Individuals that knowingly exhibited behaviors that would allow them to establish relationships with White members of the organization were still viewed as "Black" given that this was not done by sacrificing the connection to "Black people". Part of the "fraternity" charter of being Black within a given organization seemed to be an understanding that Black men could support each other in private.

The connection Black people have in an organization can be a feeling of comfort and a feeling of obligation. On one hand we do not like the perception that Black men can not be leaders in the organization; however, when Black men are leaders in the organization, they are sometimes not "Black enough". Not all Black men strongly identify with being Black. Furthermore, out of those that do have a meaningful connection to their Blackness, not all of them feel comfortable expressing it at work to colleagues of any race.

Limitations of this study

The number of participants in this study limits the generalizability of the findings to larger populations. Readers are advised to use caution when generalizing the results to a broader sample of Black middle managers. The study was also limited because it controlled for race and gender, thus it may not be applicable to those who belong to other racial or gender groups. The study also focused on the persons who had roles of the Black people who were not the "most" influential, yet were very helpful. The variance in type

of organization does not allow the study to reveal any differences that might be related to

sector or industry. The range of participant age indicated that there were multiple

generations in the study. Future research may want to examine generational differences.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to better comprehend the experiences of Black men

as they ascended to and then performed in middle management from the perspective of

embedded intergroup relations theory. The present research has provided an additional

way to interpret the theory and contributed to the field's understanding of the experience

of Black male middle managers as they relate to those above them and below them in the

organizational hierarchy. Future studies may want to examine the relationship between

middle managers and their peers. There is also value in learning about the experience of

employees that have reported to Black male middle managers.

The findings of this research provide insight into the intrapersonal and intergroup

experiences of Black men in the middle of organizations. Organizations could use the

results from this study to better understand what life is like for Black male middle

managers. It is not by ignoring racial difference that will make life in organizations fair.

By better understanding the experience of different groups inside of organizations, those

at the top of the hierarchy can make informed decisions that could make the positions

more satisfying for the incumbents. This could mean bringing middle managers together

for meetings and might also provide further data for the need for racial affinity groups.

This study may also provide executive coaches with an understanding of the dynamics

that may be impacting Black men in middle management. They can use this research to

inform their thinking when working with Black middle managers or managers that work

with them. This dissertation provides an approximation of the experience of Black male

middle managers in predominately white organizations.

Self Reflection

This area of research was selected because of my desire to learn more about the

experience of Black men in management. The desire was fueled by a longing to find out

more about myself. As a doctoral student studying organizational psychology I plan to

eventually work closely with managers or to join the managerial ranks. To that end, I am

currently managing six direct reports at a non-profit organization. This research was

professionally and personally rewarding. Spending time with all Black men in

management positions was deeply inspiring. I felt a sense of pride seeing them in

different sectors knowing each one held a position of power. I was overcome by the

interest they have shown in me and my research. One person sent a PowerPoint

presentation and links to graduation rates, others have leveraged their connections to

provide me a large enough sample to write this dissertation. I have also received

numerous requests to "stay in touch" or to let them know the results of the study.

In meeting with each of them I was able to feel the "connection". I felt that I

shared in the triumph of those that confronted racism and won. Just as I experienced the

pain of those that felt they could have gone further and faster if it was not for the color of

their skin. My note after one interview captures this sentiment:

> "When he spoke about the overall sense of his career. I felt sad when he spoke
> about this. It seemed to be a sad thing to look back and think that you could have
> achieved more. Especially, when you see others that have done it."

Throughout this research process I have had difficulty saying no to individuals that have

volunteered to contribute their time. I met my goal of 20 managers, yet I still had trouble

ending the data collection phase. This may speak to my desire to connect. In my current

position, I am one of 11 other mangers in my area. I am the only Black male. Of the

other, 35 at my level in the organization I am one of four who are Black. Upon reading

my notes, I found the excerpt below:

> "It has been very difficult for me to stop interviewing. I am enjoying meeting all
> of these black men. I am learning about different sectors of business. I am
> networking in a way that I would not normally do. I am receiving positive
> feedback from them about how much they are enjoying the process. They
> continually suggest people that they would have me talk to or put me in touch
> with."

Authority

Additionally, it may have been difficult for me to stop interviewing because of my

own hesitance to assert my authority. I started out very timid in my request for 90

minutes of the participant's time. I knew that this would be a lot of time for individuals

at this level in their respective organizations. Halfway through the process, I began to

feel like I was not requesting a favor. I was offering an opportunity to participate in a

study about Black men and potential to discuss their topics that they might not otherwise

discuss. Once I realized the value, I was able to assume my authority and firmly request

the time I needed for the interview. It is also true that I was only able to fully seize my

authority when I was confident that I would have enough participants.

Inserting Myself in the Research

I put myself into the data collection while conducting the interviews. Some

participants requested clarification when I asked them about similarities and differences

between them and Black men higher up. I responded by indicating that I was interested

in the difference or similarities in action. By providing that answer, I limited their

response to the information I considered to be of value. As a result, I may have

insinuated that other dimensions such as educational level or personal values were less

important.

It's not that Black or White

I was surprised that the men in this study cited themselves as something that held

them back. My bias was that I did not even think of any possibilities other than race. I

did not have any particular hypothesis but assumed any barriers would be race related. I

tend to think about the race related variables or factors that may be beyond the men's

control. However, there are self imposed reasons that contribute to the lack of black men

in management. These rarely get any attention however they are hugely important for

two reasons. Organizations may want to be more flexible on what "key experiences"

they require managers to have. Secondly, the general public needs to recognize that there

are other things contributing to the absence of Black men in middle management. It was

particularly surprising that these men turned down development opportunities and

promotions that would require them moving their families or moving away from their

families. This may speak to my own bias as a 26 year old who is mainly focused on

achieving my career goals. My expectations were based on my own assumptions about

what it was like as a Black male middle manager and my experience as a front-line

manager. Although some of my assumptions were confirmed, I realize that I previously

held a very narrow perspective on reasons why there are so few Black male middle

managers.

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APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Greetings,

My name is Treston Knight, and I am an advanced doctoral student studying Organizational Psychology at Rutgers University. I am writing to you for assistance with my dissertation research on Black men in management positions.

There is a notably small amount of scholarly literature that concentrates on Black men who hold leadership positions in corporate settings. In an effort to reverse this trend, I would like to interview Black male managers. Participants in this study will have an opportunity to share the significant experiences that influenced their current level of achievement. Further, your contribution to this research will benefit early career professionals that aspire to corporate success.

For this project, a "corporate setting" includes any large organization, public, private, or non-profit. Managers are defined as individuals who oversee at least three direct reports.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please call (732) 589-4694 or email me at trestonknight@gmail.com.

Thank you for taking time to consider my request. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Treston Knight

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Before we start to talk about your career, I would like to hear a little about your background.

1. Where did you grow up?

2. Can you tell me about what you were like when you were young and any early career goals?

3. Describe your current job, including how many people report to you and who you report to.

4. What would your next job be?

5. Why would you want that job?

6. What does your dream job look like?

7. What factors help to facilitated/expedite your development as a manager?
   a. Individual
   b. Group
   c. Organization
   d. Which of those factors was most significant?
   e. Has race played a role?

8. What factors have impaired/impeded your development as a Manager?
   a. Individual
   b. Group
   c. Organization
   d. Does anything stand out from the rest?
   e. Has race played a role?

9. Is there anyone that stands out as having a particular positive impact on your development as a manager?
   a. How did the relationship develop? When?
   b. What did they do?
   c. Is this person still in your life?

10. Is there a life-partner or significant other (past or present) that has influenced or contributed to you becoming a manager?
    a. What did they do?

11. What are the challenges of being a manager?

12. What has it been like to supervise White staff members?

13. What was it like to supervise Black staff members?

14. Those of other racial or ethnic groups?

15. How do you understand race relations in this organization?

16. What does it mean to be a Black man in this organization?

17. How do you relate to other Black men in the organization?

18. What differences do you see between your actions and those of Black men higher up in the organizational hierarchy? What similarities?

19. What would have to change to get more Black men into management positions?

20. What do you wish someone told you at the beginning of your career that you had to figure out about along the way?

21. In what ways if any have the race and gender of your bosses affected your career?

Reflect for a moment on the feedback you have gotten over the years:

22. Is there any developmental feedback that has been consistent over time?

23. Is there any positive feedback that has been consistent overtime?

24. Is there any negative feedback that has been consistent overtime?

25. What challenges remain for you in your career? Any strategies to deal with them?

26. Have you ever felt you wanted to quit? Why? What kept you from quitting?

27. If you were to take a step back and look at your career as a whole up to this point, what is your overall sense of how it has been?

28. Do you have any suggestions for future Black managers regarding how to gain access to management positions?

29. I would also like to get a sense of what it was like for you to do this interview with me today…

30. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONAIRE

Demographic Questions:

1.   What sector is your company in?
      a.   Advanced Technology (computers, software, telecommunications)
      b.   Aerospace/ Defense
      c.   Apparel, Retail, Textiles
      d.   Banking
      e.   Consumer Products
      f.   Energy/ Utilities
      g.   Entertainment/ Hospitality
      h.   Financial Services
      i.   Industrials (chemicals, publishing, scientific equipment, rubber, plastics, transportation)
      j.   Non-profit Organization
      k.   Healthcare
      l.   Professional Services
      m.   Other: (please specify) _____

2.   What is your functional area?
      a.   Financial Accounting
      b.   General Management
      c.   Information Systems
      d.   Insurance and Risk
      e.   Manufacturing and Production Management
      f.   Marketing/Advertising/Sales
      g.   Professional/Technical
      h.   Public Relations and Communications
      i.   Other: (please specify) _____

3.   In what year did you join this organization? _____

4.   What is your current title? _____

5.   How long have you been in your current position? _____

6.   What is your date of birth? _____

7.   How do you identify (racially & ethnically)? _____

8.	What is the highest level of education you have attained?
    a.	No college Degree
    b.	2-yr. College Degree
    c.	Bachelor's Degree
    d.	LLB/JD
    e.	MD/DDS
    f.	MA/MS
    g.	MBA
    h.	Doctoral Degree
    i.	Other (please specify) _____

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT CONCENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Treston Knight, who is a Doctoral Student at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to explore the experience of Black men in management positions.

Approximately 20 subjects will participate in the study, and each individual's participation will last approximately 90 minutes.

Participation in this study will involve one interview session lasting approximately 90 minutes. In the interview, you will be asked a series of open-ended questions regarding your experiences as a manager.

Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you, such as: the sector your company is in, your functional area, title, date of birth, racial & ethnic identification, and highest degree attained. The researcher will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for at least three years.

The risk of participating in this study will be minimal while the opportunity to reflect on career achievements may prove beneficial. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

Also, if for any reason participating in this study should cause more stress than expected, you can contact the Mental Health Hotline in New Jersey at 1-866-202-HELP (4357).

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact myself at (732) 589-4694 or via email at trestonknight@gmail.com or you can contact my advisor Dr. Clayton P. Alderfer, at (732) 445-2000 or via email claygray@aol.com.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

AUDIO TAPE ADDENDUM TO CONCENT FORM

You have already agreed to participate in a research study exploring the experience of Black male managers conducted by Treston Knight. I am asking for your permission to allow me to audio tape the interview as part of that research study.   You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for to ensure that the information disclosed in the interview will be accurately rendered during the transcription process and to ensure accuracy of the data.

The recording(s) will include information about your work history and life experience. Your position in the company and name of your employer will not be recorded.

The recording(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet and linked with a code to subjects' identity; in a locked file cabinet and labeled with subjects' name or other identifiable information and will be will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT'S SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE BLACK MANAGERS

Don't be a victim. Truly, and there's a lot of the victim mentality and that's not just with black men. There's a lot of that going around these days. Don't be a victim, be solution oriented. Figure out how you can solve someone else's problem and then they'll want you on their team. There are degrees of racism. I truly do believe that everyone notices that you're a black man; everyone notices that. Now what comes along with it varies. Some people are going to be a little skeptical in the beginning and get over it. Some people are going to be skeptical all the way through, but still be on your team and some people are just going to have a deep prejudice all the way. I truly do believe there are less of those deeply prejudiced people and more people who are just skeptical in the beginning. In a perfect world, should you have to win them over? No, you shouldn't but this isn't a perfect world. As I said, it's not fair. But when you do it and get them on board, they're just as loyal I think as the next person would be. So just get rid of victim mentality, the anger, and take that energy to be positive and be solution oriented.

You have some big skills. You're not as good as people say you are. You're not as bad as people say you are. I definitely think that you have to have some type of support system outside of your immediate support system, outside your family and your friends. I think you need to have people who have walked in the places you're trying to get to: (Someone) that you can bounce things off of that looks like you, talks like you, walks like you. I think you have to have that, if you want to keep your sanity and make sure you are staying true to what you're trying to accomplish.

Get their foot in the door. I tell kids, just like you're doing right now. Black kids have to realize it's not just getting an education, but it's getting engaged in the process early while you're getting that education. I mean that by crafting their career aspirations to make sure that they are able to get into an internship program, because at the end of the day when I'm hiring people, kids that have been in an internship program, that have done some projects are the one's that I am hiring. If you look at it, once you come out of college internships are the only history that you have within that discipline.

And if you come out and you don't have any, you went to school and, yeah, you could make more money perhaps waiting on tables or doing whatever, but it had nothing to do with your career goals, then that resume gets put right over here at first glance, and HR puts it there. But now I have this one, and this guy has worked for these two companies with these two internships or three internships, and he's contributed to this program. Plus, it gives them an opportunity to start learning a lot of the buzz words and the language that needs to be on a resume when it hits somebody's desk.

Just keep your ego in check and stay true to your roots. You're always better off apologizing than asking for permission. You've overcome so much to be in the seat that you're in, you've already exercised good judgment or you wouldn't be there, because

there are probably 20 white counterparts with equal skill sets. So you bring something. Don't ever lose sight of that.

More importantly, by not losing sight of that you have to offer you also have to find a way to give it back because a whole generation will be lost if you don't. For me, it's been like my father telling me something and me ignoring it until it stares me in the face. You see these young black men and they're just drifting. And you go, "Yeah, I want to sell Lear jets and villas in Italy to wealthy folks or I can save a few kids." I'll save a few kids. No question.

I guess it is two fold. Don't put limitations on yourself. Don't think "I'm black and therefore it's going to be tough." Don't think in those terms. Just think, "The world is there, it's yours and that's that." And don't be suspicious. Accept what you see people doing. Don't (justify) things by saying, "Oh the reason that I didn't get that is because somebody's trying to hold me back." In other words, almost ignore what people are doing, so long as in yourself you know that you can achieve it, and the world is there for you. And whatever you see people trying to (hold you back), just ignore it. Don't even give them credit for that. So just assume it is wide open, it's all yours and anything you see great. I run into guys, managers that were constantly suspicious. Many of them said "they are not going to let you do this" or "they are not going to let you do that." So and so is against this and so on. Don't even give them any credibility to it. Just assume that it's not even there. So don't put limits on yourself and don't assume that anybody else can put limits on you. I think that's if they handle themselves in that way, I think they will do well. I think as soon as you start thinking, "I want this but something that somebody is doing it is going to limit me," you have given them credibility and therefore internalized it a little and you take it in and it's going to hurt you. It's better to assume nothing is in your way and just go for it.

Don't give up. Establish a point as to where you want to be and shoot for it. Shoot for lofty goals. Don't limit yourself to something by saying "I just want to be here. I don't want to be there." No, man. Be in charge. Be the god. Put yourself in that position and stand up for what you feel, what you're working for, or what is right. You can accomplish anything you want. There are no limitations. There are no limitations. You're limited only by yourself and by what you are thinking. You can always achieve anything that you want. You can always achieve anything you want, no matter what.

They need to expose themselves, they need to seek out other managers us we need to communicate more we need to maintain liaison and contacts with each other we need to lean on each other for help and support whether it is a positive thing or if you are dealing with adverse actions can't take this on myself we need to reach out to each other and we need to be railing to give the support back and that is the only way we can combat this. I've had days where man I am catching hell but time kept me out and I pick up the phone and I say "Man can I run this by you?" I bounced things off other managers, I mean mostly other Black managers that I confide in. I say "Look I have to deal with this, how do I deal with it?" and they will tell me either they have the experience with it before or if not what I learned is do you know of anybody else I can talk to and that is how I been

able to do this, and I think that is one of the things you need to reach out and support each other on that a lot more. I think you need to expose yourself to more organizations that give you the exposure like the Black Law-enforcement Executive Association where you're meeting other Black law enforcement executives there is strength in numbers, there is strength out there, and you don't want to try to tackle all of this on your own; and sometimes you don't want to make the decision that can cost you peoples positions or jobs; you want to run things past each other. I think that is important in this agency I tell them your training take as much training as comes available to you; while you might need not need it now, when it is time for you to sit down and write those knowledge, skills, and abilities on application and you can articulate something that you have been exposed to or experienced. That can elevate you.

Work hard and don't let anyone else define to you really what working hard is, especially if it's somebody who doesn't appear to want to work hard, because you may have people who are like, they're not really going to put that much effort into it, and they will tell you, "Oh, that's enough. I did that, that's enough," or whatever. But you may have the capability of doing' more or the desire to do more. Don't let anyone define how hard you work; observe, watch. Watch people who you admire who have gotten in the position you may want to get into, and ask them what they did, what was their career path? Never back down from teaching yourself new stuff, take whatever courses you can, look for any opportunity to get better, networking, knowing people, making friends with people, that type of thing.

And when you are in a position to, like, present yourself or whatever, like in front of people or whatever, do that with the idea of making an impression no matter what job you're in. Even if you, I don't know, if you're the mail clerk in the office or whatever, and someone is saying, "Tell me about what you do," Talk about what you do, how you do it in a positive way, what things you maybe innovated or what best practices you have, whatever. Don't tell them, "This office sucks, or that type of thing. Remember that when you present yourself to others, you might be talking to somebody who might say, "Okay, I remember him before, he had a good attitude, he had good ideas," and this and that, whatever, not somebody who was, a mouthy type or whatever, that type of thing. So I would say observe, teach yourself, learn whatever you can, talk to people and don't let anyone define how hard you work, that's my main thing. You have to be satisfied with the effort that you put in.

Find a mentor. Find a mentor. Find somebody who can mentor you, who is invested in you. Somebody – and doesn't necessarily have to be somebody that looks like you. That is the ideal situation, but even if…Bill Clinton showed up on my doorstep or whoever, you know what I mean? Henry Kissinger showed up and is like, "I see something in you I want to – I want you to be a fill in the blank" Find a mentor that's invested in you.

Network. Thoroughly network. Do conferences and network with people. Don't look at people for color. Go to the NASBAs, go to the NACAs, go to the ACEs, go to those conventions and get on committees, but also befriend people of every ilk. And just keep being yourself. You draw people to you.

Love who you are. When you love who you are, people want to be around you. When you love what you have – if you notice the man in the neighborhood who's washing his Cadillac or washing his Maxima, washing his Jaguar, people stop and they chat with him. Or you see the guy who's pulling his boat out and bringing it in the backyard, or you see the person who's cutting his grass. People are going to stop and chat with you and engage with you. Love something about your life to the extent that even if it's a new coat. Love yourself, so others can love you. Love yourself. Be a real Black man and let the world see what Black men, to me, it's that fine gold, it means that brown sugar, and it means that fine purse of oil. Let them see what it means. Love yourself, man. Be genuine. Love people, man. Love yourself so you can love others. …And then network, ask for an internship. Be prepared, always be prepared. And jump in, and don't be upset with doing dirty work. You know, don't be upset with doing dirty work. Learn. Learn.

I think you have the power piece. And I think, too, how you dress matters. Like today, we're having a special event, so it's a jeans day. But I wear a suit and tie every day. I think people respond to your differently when you have suit and tie on. I'm the type, where if I wear a hat, a skully, I don't have to wear a coat, because I'm warm. I know that people have an initial reaction to me differently even when I have a skully on, when I (also) have suit on. But I don't care. I wear my skully. You know? Because I'm at that point now because I can see it (their reaction), and it kind of doesn't matter. I'm comfortable with everything else. So if you take the suit away – and (keep) the skully – then you're a thug. Right? And then you're just The Wire stereotype to everyone else. So those things don't do us good service.

Knowing the environment, partnering very quickly with your career, recognizing who you are, what you bring and not being afraid to take risks. But of the utmost importance is the ability to network and to find a mentor, because it's not all about what you know. It also has to do with who you know. And the more you can get out there and create those relationships, the better it will be for your career.

My old manager gave me these – what's called the seven Ps: proper prior planning prevents piss-poor performance. Seven Ps.

So let's say (Company name) doesn't retain me come January, mid January, and I have to look for another job. You'd better believe once I get to where I am I'm going. I am going to look for a mentor. Hopefully I'll find a brother. But even if it's not a brother, I'm going to find a mentor in the organization that's going to teach me the culture quick. I would just say for managers, get a mentor. If you're starting new within the company

and you're serious about a career moving upward in the organization, get a mentor who is at least two levels up. Someone who is successful and understands organization culture.

If you feel you have something to contribute, go after it. Be persistent, be consistent, and the one that's been passed on to me over time, be patient. Because if you can't – there's nothing – and I know this now and I knew this in my mind, but when you're wanting something it doesn't work, but I remind myself of this all the time now, you can only – you only have control over you.

And all you can do with anybody else is persuade, kind of coax, maybe coach, and lead by the hand in some cases; but you can't coerce, because they'll only do what needs to be done to get you off their back. And as soon as you're off their back, they'll stop, so you got to go back and do it again. And actually that is going to be your big downfall, because you're never going to get to where you need to go.

So, if you want something, go after it; but be honest with yourself before you do that and know whether you have what it takes to go after it. And if you don't, can you get it. And if that's the case, go for it, but just realize that it's just not going to fall in your lap; you just work for it.

I know how I deal with people, as I tried to describe to you, the equitable one, that type of thing, but people – there's different ways to deal with people, and my style may not be somebody else's style and that type of thing. So you're not in this by yourself and you are going to have to actually move the hearts and minds of other people. It's not going to do it by fear: you'll get a little bit of movement but that's going to come back and get you. They have to buy-in to what it is that you're trying to get them to do; and if you don't believe it, you're not going to even buy into it, so you can't get much…

Be willing to give of yourself, that contribution factor that I talked about, be consistent, and be persistent because it is not going to all come to you at one time which means you got to be patient. That was the hardest thing for me to learn, and I still haven't learned it, but I'm working on it.

I think that in terms of gaining the access, learn things that you really need to do – again, I always go back to this performance because that's what we're going to look at. Second, is the whole issue of building relationships. Third, we just need to kind of make it known [desire to advance]. It's just like with me. My mindset is because I've grown up this way is that hey, I'm not going to beat on the door, etc. You can see my results. My results have always been there. My name is known throughout the whole company.

I think that is where I've made the mistake. So we need to speak on up and we don't need to do what I did because at this point in time my results will speak for myself. If there is something that I really, really want, then I can get in there and knock on that door, but somebody coming up, get the results, build the relationships. But also make it known that "Hey, I've got some interest to be here [management]." There is nothing wrong with

raising your hand and asking that question and then them telling you "Here's what you need to do". Then once you do that, then you go back and say I did it. So therefore, when it does open up and they are not calling you, then you have to go back and hold them accountable – hey Tom, we talked about this. We talked about it a year ago. If you're not doing that, nobody else is really doing it for you don't have those relationships going on.

Start in an organization; get all the education you can; work hard and take tough jobs. Don't avoid them. Don't avoid challenging and tough jobs. Take jobs nobody else wants. Take on things nobody has been able to do. That's right. That's what it takes. Fix things that are broken. That's right. Do it. Be the best whatever you are. That's what you have to do. There are no shortcuts to success. As Thomas Edison stated, 'Being a genius is 99 percent perspiration; one percent inspiration.' Work hard. And that moment of glory when you get recognition, a plaque, that's it. After that, it's a history lesson. Now get back to work. Now go do something else. You cannot rest on your past achievements. That's only to get you to your next step. You have still got to achieve.

I think it's critical that you prioritize what you give people to say about you. Now under that bucket comes a high level of professionalism, business savvy, preparedness, and consistency. And if you go about your daily work recognizing that everything that you do provides – gives them something to talk about, and you can look in a mirror and feel good about it, then you've done about all you can do. Don't be afraid to ask for help, but be prepared to have dialogue for why you need the help, so that it's not misunderstood. So do your due diligence.

Recognize that every interaction is an interview. I don't care if it's in the cafeteria. Every interaction is an interview. I'll use an example. We had an outing. The outing was a bunch of sales guys and their management. Of course, there was a few of us who were going to do the after-hours piece. By this time, you're talking about grown men who have probably consumed about as much as you can between the hours of 6:00 and 12:30, 1:00. We got a surprise visit from upper level management who decided that he wanted to just spend some time with the field guys. So he and his executive assistant and one other person, who I'm not sure who that person was, were in the same location that we were in. You know, enjoying, picking up the tab, having a good time, talking. Talking business with those who wanted to talk business, and laughing with those who wanted to laugh. Both have pros and cons. But I also recognize that that was an opportunity to give people something to say about you. So there are some people who walked away from that thing saying, "Man, I wish I hadn't – " I'm quite sure you do, but that was an opportunity you weren't prepared for.

We don't have many chances and opportunities, so we can ill afford not to be on our Ps and Qs. Now I'm not saying whether you should drink or not. I'm not saying that at all. I'm saying that you want to always be ready for whenever the opportunity comes, so make sure that you can perform at your best. And so to a young guy – to a young African-American, I would say let everybody else do the drinking. Let everybody else have the great time. You can have a good time, but again, we're not here, to create

friends. We're here to get a job done. And if you prioritize that piece, everything else will come to bear.

When I look at an organization, I only see four of us, the question is, "Why." Right? The question really is, why is it that way? Some of it is internal to the companies. But I think some of it actually has to fall on the shoulders of those individuals who are trying to manage, and some of it falls on my shoulders, to make sure that I'm reaching back, providing exposure, providing insight and perspective to people who want to be in a career. So looking into the organization I have now, and having some black managers and people who I think are very capable. But I think it goes back to, what is the right platform to develop people?

And I think that in some cases, we haven't done a good job at that. So it just goes back to making sure that as you look at a company that you want to go work for, really understand, how do they develop their people? How do they develop their leaders? What is the access point to the next level? Because a lot of times, you're interviewing people, you're talking about that current role, and what that means. And some people say, oh, yeah. There's a good career path. But tell me what that looks like. You know, how many African-American leaders do you have? How many – so I think just being able to ask those questions will help you, at least early on, understand what you're up against to some degree, before you actually engage and say, "I'm going to go work for this company. I'm going to go work for x" There are just basic questions. Hey, do you support diversity? Well, how do you support diversity? Well, we have a diversity network. Oh, great. That's good. So what does that mean in terms of, how people involve themselves with that? And – those diversity networks,– is that like a feather in my cap if I'm in there? Does it give me opportunity to work in other parts of the business?

Really exposing yourself. I mean, the bottom line is it comes down to getting results and being effective in that process. So that's really the bottom line. But giving yourself access to that type of insight before you actually join a company I think will help a lot of African-Americans who are looking to really strive to get to the top understand what is the climate in that organization. You know, if you look – sometimes you can just go out to the website and look, and say look at the – look at the executive staff. Do you see anybody that looks like you on there? Right? And if you don't – not saying that's bad, because probably 75 percent of corporate America, as you know, probably in some of your discussions, are – doesn't look like that. But I think just having the perspective to say, "Okay. I don't have any senior VPs. Do I have any – how many VPs do you have?" So maybe, we're still coming up that role. But I don't know. We'll see.

Make more political friends and pay them in one form or another. Or become a brilliant communicator and get things done that way.

If you're currently a black manager, then you need to understand where the growth opportunities are in your corporation. You know, I say this to young people. It doesn't matter what your career is, or whether you are a manager or what. Success doesn't come on the backside of a wave. Success comes on the front side of a wave. I think that we have to be unafraid to get outside the mold. There's just nothing wrong with being outside the box and pursuing things that are outside the box. And we don't have to go traditional lines. We don't have to start a career, and only do that particular line of work. Most of us have highly transferable skills and abilities, and we have to have some goals and objectives that we want to strive for. And work is a means of getting to your goals, to your personal goals. And your personal goals don't always have to be about money, because you can lose that too quickly. You can never lose knowledge. That doesn't go away. And I think you have to have a more optimistic view of life than a pessimistic view of life. You have to recognize that when a door seems to be closing and it's calamity, that there's another door that will open. If you're too depressed about the door that's closing, then therefore looking down all the time, you're not going to sneak up on the one that's opening. So you can't let some of the negative things that go on in life just stop you and knock you down. That's one piece of advice.

Do your homework, do your research, know where you want to go. And the same thing we do with our nonprofit. Do a lot of investigative work. Understand what it takes to be successful in those particular roles. Then number two, I think black men need to be more opportunistically aggressive. I think a lot of people think, "If I study this in school, this is what I can be." No! If you study this in school, it then gives you a platform to do a whole bunch of other things, some of which are completely related to what you studied in college, but in many cases it's just, you happened to be some place and you met somebody who introduced you to someone who got you there. I don't think enough people, and I hate this cliché, but think out of the box. Saying to themselves, "I'm going to get my college degree, I'm going to get this job, I'm going to focus on always being as good as I can be in that job and I'm always going to be open to what can come next." I don't think a lot of people think that way.

And particularly for, senior management positions where, depending upon the role, you may or may not need industry experience, but more than anything else you need to be a good manager. That is both understanding your process, understanding and managing risk in that process, and understanding all the components that feed into you being able to do your job.

Get involved in what the core value is of the company. So figure out very quickly, "What does this company do? Where is the revenue from?" So if pharmaceuticals, it's going to come out of pharmaceutical sales. If you get into sales and marketing and just get with those leaders, get yourself some exposure in areas where it adds value to the company.

Do not put yourself in a staff position right away, because then you will lack credibility coming out of that position into something else. Go the other way, figure out how the money is made and dive in. I did that here. Figure out where the value is created and get yourself there. People will respect that.

To quote Colin Powell, "Never let your ego get so close to your position that when your position goes, your ego goes with it."