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THE AADERE MODEL OF PROGRESSION IN THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF HIGH-SALARIED BLACK MANAGERS

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

The AADERE Model of Progression in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry: 
An Empirical Study of High-Salaried Black Managers

by

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Applying grounded theory methodology and method, this qualitative study uncovers and presents a rich, theoretically expressed understanding of the experience of salaried Black hospitality and tourism professionals who earn at least $100,000 annually. A 13-step customized research process featuring a novel literature review method, which utilizes researcher pre-data collection assumptions as a framework for conceptualizing and processing an unwieldy literature, enhancing post-data analysis, and developing research conclusions, is introduced.

Twenty loosely structured, open-ended, and in-depth interviews (12 male) are the singular data collection tool. An exhaustive analysis of participant transcripts resulted in 5,337 coding incidents, or coins, and yielded 30 subcategories. Respondents report a wealth of opportunity, guidance, and support and are well respected by the White power structure. But while there is some cause for celebration, there is a lingering fear of being regarded as outsiders striving to fit in and become full citizens of American enterprise.

With 1832, 1040, 903, and 826 coins, respectively, discrimination, experience, relationships, and excellence surfaced as the factors most relevant to success. In addition, active awareness materialized as the core concept integrating and explaining the entire
emergent theory, which is dubbed AADERE (pronounced add-EAR) and denotes active awareness in discrimination, experience, relationships, and excellence.

The AADERE model holds that aspirants must: (1) recognize the pervasiveness of workplace and social discrimination and proactively avoid negative perceptions, (2) appreciate the importance of relevant and broad-based work experience and subject area expertise and focus on developing the same, (3) build and maintain authentic and quality interpersonal relationships, and (4) understand the criticality of excellence in how Blacks present themselves in predominantly White corporate America and constantly achieve distinction in various aspects of job performance. As well, the model articulates the following theoretical propositions: (1) Managerial success increases as active awareness of discrimination, experience, relationships, and excellence increase, (2) The higher the level of active awareness, the less of an issue is discrimination, (3) As active awareness increases, experience, relationships, and excellence increase, and (4) Managing discrimination is the greatest success consideration followed by experience, relationships, and excellence.

Ultimately, this study heralds the advent of an exciting area of research as the substantial ground broken uncovers a fresh stream of important and practical inquiry that can positively transform hospitality by helping the powers that be and that could be work together to level the corporate playing field and maximally attract and optimize the profuse talents of diverse individuals.
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*The devil is a lie.*

—African-American religious idiom
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Applying grounded theory methodology and method, in large part, as it is presented by Strauss and Corbin (1998), the central research question of this empirical study is:

*What is the experience of salaried Black hospitality and tourism professionals in the United States whose pretax salaries are $100,000 or more annually?* Through constant comparative analysis, the goal of this phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiry was to comprehend the essence of this experience and to establish what it means for Blacks in the United States (U.S.) hospitality and tourism industry.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to uncover and present a rich, theoretically expressed understanding of the experience of salaried Black hospitality and tourism professionals who earn at least $100,000 annually. The intent of this examination of high-salaried Black hospitality and tourism professionals (HSBHTPs) was to: (1) increase general awareness about this group, (2) explore the diversity and range of upper-level possibilities for Blacks and inspire students, employees, professionals, and others to set and achieve greater goals, (3) investigate whether HSBHTPs believe they compare favorably with their counterparts in order to celebrate equitable industry treatment and achievement or provide a rationale for positive change, and (4) develop information and resources to help predict the experience/status of similarly situated Blacks and more accurately estimate outcomes for would-be HSBHTPs. While these are some of the directions that participant conversations and subsequent analyses could have taken, I deliberately chose to be led by the process rather than limited by imagination. Indeed, the
objective was to listen deeply and empathetically; analyze intensively; follow the data where they led; truly share the story participants told; and conscientiously convey the meaning, lessons, and other conclusions that organically emerged.

Significance of Study

While there are a few studies that deal with the experiences of female and minority executives in the hospitality and tourism industry and there is a good deal of research that broadly examines the experiences of Black business managers, I found no empirical work that attempts an in-depth analysis of the experience of HSBHTPs from their perspective. This study is particularly important and unique in its specialized exploration of SBHTPs in the U.S. whose pretax salaries are $100,000 or more annually.

Employing this arguably arbitrary monetary divide may provide future studies more in-depth opportunities to explore the realities of some of the highest paid SBHTPs in the nation. After all, only 13,215,000 out of a total of 240,144,000 people 15 years and over received a total monetary income of $100,000 or more in 2008, according to Census data (United States Census Bureau, 2009). In fact, only 619,000 out of 29,979,000 Blacks (i.e., people who self-reported themselves as Black alone or in combination with some other race) across all industries and occupations received total monetary income of $100,000 and over in 2008 (United States Census Bureau, 2009). Of course, none of this considers the reality that the current project focuses only on individuals whose pretax salaries from a single job equal or exceed $100,000 per year (versus individuals whose total monetary income meets or surpasses the same threshold).

This research fills an important gap in its effort to describe the experience of qualified participants in a detailed manner and from their perspectives. The goal was to discover
what is important about who and what they are and have experienced and achieved rather than presuming that existing literature and my perspective alone is sufficient.

Identifying and profiling HSBHTPs can provide hospitality and tourism and other industry professionals with useful information about the present reality of Blacks in the upper echelons of business management. Exploring the scope of this population and comparing its sociodemographics and job characteristics with data for the entire hospitality and tourism industry in the U.S., for example, can provide helpful details about the extent to which this industry is diverse and equitable in its placement and compensation of Black professionals. Investigation of the current reality of HSBHTPs relative to HTPs overall could also allow for meaningful analysis regarding the ability of compensation discrimination theory to successfully predict race-, sex-, and other sociodemographically-based pay outcome relationships.

$100,000 Rationale

An essential premise of this work is that an annual salary of US $100,000, or six figures, represents a virtually universal threshold of extraordinary financial success. This notion is borne out by Census data, which shows that only 5.5% of all individuals 15 years and over in 2008 and 2.1% of Blacks received a total monetary income of at least $100,000 (United States Census Bureau, 2009). Moreover, a $100,000 salary is commonly equated with executive status and responsibility. According to salary.com, for example, “In general the jobs in the 6figure category consist of senior management positions, usually on the chief job level, reporting to a board of directors and are at the top executive compensation range” (“Jobs by Salary,” 2008). This talent management software, compensation data and software, content and research, and advertising website
categorizes Entry Level Jobs as $10,000 - $30,000 annually, Middle Income Jobs at $30,000 - $50,000, Upper Middle Income Jobs in the $50,000 - $80,000 range, High Income Jobs as $80,000 - $100,000, and Six Figure Jobs at $100,000+.

There have been a host of business publications in the last 10 years whose titles suggest that a $100,000, or six-figure, salary is a big deal. While the titles collectively imply that individual annual income of $100,000 or more is minimally noteworthy, with one going so far as to refer to the amount as big money, everything from the preponderance of exclamation points to the ad nauseam use of secret makes it clear that this earning level is commonly perceived as aspirational, mystical, and exclusive. D. A. Benton’s (2000) The $100,000 Club: How to Make a Six-Figure Income is a rare example of the simultaneous use of the $100,000 and six-figure labels in a title to denote extraordinary individual income achievement.

Barbara Wolcott’s (2007) Making $100,000 Per Year and John Lucht’s (2000) Rites of Passage at $100,000 to $1 Million+: Your Insider’s Lifetime Guide to Executive Job-Changing and Faster Career Progress in the 21st Century utilize only the monetary demarcation in their wide-ranging discussions, while a number of authors address the $100,000 income level by trade. Education examples include Senior N.Y.C. Teachers Would Earn $100,000 Under New Contract (Gewertz, 2006), Minn. Governor Suggests $100,000 Teacher Salary (Bowman, 2003), and The $100,000 Teacher: A Teacher’s Solution to America’s Declining Public School System (Crosby, 2003). Writing examples include Bly’s (2006) Secrets of a Freelance Writer: How to Make $100,000 a Year or More and McCutheon’s (2006) Damn! Why Didn’t I Write That?: How Ordinary People are Raking in $100,000 or More Writing Nonfiction Books & How You Can Too! And,
How to Earn at Least $100,000 a year in Network Marketing: Study Guide by Randy Gage (2001) is yet another occupationally-specific exemplar. Gifford and Baxi (2007); Enelow and Kursmark (2006); William E. Montag (2002); and Craig S. Rice (1998) outline practical tools in Network Your Way to $100,000 and Beyond; Executive Job Search for $100,000 to $1 Million+ Jobs: Resumes, Career Portfolios, Leadership Profiles, Executive Branding Statements and More; CareerJournal.com Resume Guide for $100,000 Plus Executive Jobs; and The $100,000 Resume, respectively. And Make $100,000+ From Home! (McIntosh, 2005) and How to Earn Up to $100,000 a Year or More From Home by Mail: The Complete Guide to Starting Your Own Home-Based Mail Order Business (Thomas, 2002) attempt to teach their readers how to generate a high annual income without even leaving the house!

Numerous recent business publications, however, use the catchy *six figure* moniker in discussing elevated annual earnings. Broad-based texts include Zwell’s (2008) *Six Figure Salary Negotiation: Industry Insiders Get You the Money You Deserve*, Johnson’s (2008) *How I Created a Six Figure Income Giving Away a Dead Guy’s Book*, Malone’s (2008) *Six Simple Steps Simple Six Figures*, Murphy’s (2007) *The Six-Figure Club*, Belanger’s (2007) *Why I Quit My 6-Figure Job*, Stankovich’s (2006) *Six-Figure Incomes: Profit From America’s Best Communicators*, Kilborn’s (2005) *The Five-Bedroom, Six-Figure Rootless Life*, Bonoff’s (2003) *Zero to Six Figures*, Christensen’s (2002) *Six Figure Income: Making a Six Figure Income On Your Terms, Essential Life Balance for Today’s Successful Real Estate Agents and Sales People In Any field*, Leebron’s (2001) *Six Figures*, and Schellhardt’s (1999) *More Directors Are Raking in Six-Figure Pay*. Education-related examples include *Make Money Teaching Online: How to Land Your*
First Academic Job, Build Credibility, and Earn a Six-Figure Salary (Babb & Mirabella, 2007); 6-Figure Salaries? To Many Teachers, a Matter of Course (Fessenden & Barbanel, 2005); Rise of the Six-Figure Teacher (Fessenden & Barbanel, 2005); Six-Figure Salaries for More Principals (Hook, 2005); A Shortage of Business Professors Leads to 6-Figure Salaries for New Ph.D.’s (Mangan, 2001); and Six-Figure Bid for Top Recruit (Thornton, 2000). Examples from writing are James-Enger’s (2009) Six-figure Freelancing, The Writer’s Guide to Making More Money; Turner’s (2007) Secrets of Six-Figure Freelancers; Hart’s (2006) 101 Ways to Find Six-Figure Medical or Popular Ghostwriting Jobs & Clients: A Step-by-Step Guide; and Sullivan and Murphy’s (2005) The Wealthy Writer: How to Earn a Six-Figure Income as a Freelance Writer (No Kidding!). While Six-Figure Sisters (Holmes, 2006) focuses specifically on Black womyn, the similarly titled Secrets of Six-Figure Women: Surprising Strategies to Up Your Earnings and Change Your Life (Stanny, 2004) is intended for more general femyle audiences. Real estate industry examples include Getting Started as a Commercial Mortgage Broker: How to Get to a Six-Figure Salary in 12 Months (Gineris, 2009) and The Mortgage Originator Success Kit: The Quick Way to a Six-Figure Income (Seppinni, 2005).

Six-figure publications have been produced in areas as diverse as blogging and the Internet, Christianity, consulting, contracting, finance, law, public service employment, sales, and (public) speaking. The respective cases in point are Pro-Blogger: Secrets for Blogging Your Way to a Six-Figure Income (Rowse & Garrett, 2008) and Wanted: M.B.A.’s to Work for Six Figures (Vogelstein, 1999); How to Be the Head and Not the Tail! A Christian Manifesto for Making Six Figures (Farrar-Rosemon, 2005); Six-Figure
Consultant (Bly, 1998); The Six-Figure Contractor (Miglin, 2006); Neighborhood Report: Midtown; I’d Like a Mocha Frappuccino, and a Six-Figure Job in Finance (Kolhatkar, 2004); Nashville Firms Hit Six Figures for Starting Lawyers (“Nashville Firms Hit,” 2006); Six-Figure Salaries are not Limited to Private Sector: Public Employees Can Make Big Money, Too (Trageser, 2004); How I Created a Six Figure Income Sales Career! (Jennings, 2008) and Major Account Sales Strategies: Breaking the Six Figure Barrier in Consultive Selling (Shifflett, 2000); and The Six-Figure Speaker: Formula for a Six-Figure Income as a Professional Speaker (Fillmore, 2008). And, finally, Bob Burnham (2006) talks about what it takes to generate at least $100,000 domestically in How to Make a Million Dollars in Your Home Service Business: Discover the Secrets to a Six Figure Income from a Front Line Entrepreneur.

Research Stance

While my investigative roots sprouted at NYU via the Margot Ely (Ely, 1991; Ely, Vinz, Anzul, & Downing, 1997) school of qualitative inquiry, I have always been interested in how perceptions of race, class, and gender impact the experience of various populations; and, my research perspective is unabashedly critical. Critical theory is strident in its insistence that the systematic privileging of some groups (such as the able-bodied, well off, White, middle-aged, male, and heterosexual) translates into the organized oppression and disenfranchisement of others (including the disabled, those below middle class, non-Whites, the young and the old, non-males, and non-heterosexuals) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Levy, Alvesson, & Willmot, 2003).

This research, indeed, is an ‘ethical and political act’ since, as Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 21) explain, critical theory is critical of the societal structure that advantages
some at the expense of others. The cultural theorist Stuart Hall’s work figures prominently in my study because of his social theorist and cultural constructionist perspectives. The institutional approach to language and culture that Hall follows, which places language use within a framework of power, is commonsensical to me. Hall views all individuals ‘as simultaneous makers and consumers of culture, participating in that culture according to their place in economic and political structures. This area emphasizes the role of institutions – governments, churches, states – in making culture’ (Bicket, 2003, ¶ 1). I agree with this effective indictment of societal structures.

The seminal work in the refinement of my critical theoretical perspective, however, is Rothenberg’s Race, Class, and Gender in the United States (2004). In it, the writings of such compelling scholars as Dalton Conley (2004), Beverly Daniels Tatum (2004), Marilyn Frye (2004), Gregory Mantsios (2004), and Peggy McIntosh (2004) powerfully delineate the asymmetric reality of race, gender, and class dynamics in the modern American socioeconomic context. Conley (2004) discusses the sociocultural realities which render Black families, even at upper income levels, far less able than Whites to economically navigate the short and long terms. Tatum’s (2004) analogy of racism as a moving walkway at the airport highlights the problem of passive racists who seem to do nothing wrong, yet unwittingly go along with the flow that transports them to the same destination as active racists, who effectively run in the same direction as the walkway via blatant and intentional acts of discrimination and bigotry. While Tatum calls for us to fight oppression by adopting anti-racist policies and actively moving in the opposite direction of the status quo, I extend her analogy to other dimensions of diversity and urge
everyone to be anti-ableist, anti-classist, anti-ageist, anti-sexist, and anti-heterosexist, for example. For, as Frye (2004) implies, race is just one area of operation for oppression shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable, but...systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction (p. 176).

Mantsios’ fundamental message (2004) is that racism and sexism exacerbate class outcomes, and McIntosh (2004) points out that while the privileged are typically unaware of the interlocking oppressions which consistently advantage some while disadvantaging others, each of the affected groups is aware; and, their reality remains unchanged.

**Progressive Syntax**

Just as renowned social theorist Patricia Hill Collins employs and explains her capitalization of words like *Black* and *White* when referring to race (2005), there are several writing and language adjustments I consistently make for socio-politically expedient reasons. First of all my feminist, critical theorist, and rationalist proclivities compel me to divorce man from woman in favor of a more egalitarian syntax that emphasizes the wholeness and separateness of each and encourages ongoing thinking about how we all can strive to be anti-sexist. As well, it is my desire to be anti-ableist, anti-classist, anti-racist, anti-ageist, anti-heterosexist, and anti-ist-ish in every reasonable way. The goal is not to unnecessarily complicate grammar but to continually foster an environment in which each of us is consistently thoughtful about speaking and behaving in ways that respect and uplift everyone and move us closer to our best selves.

Borrowed and new productions of this syntax include the following: *femyle* for *female*, *humyn* for *human*, *sxe* for *she*, and *womyn* for *woman/women*. These syntactic
presentations are exclusively for written purposes as the verbal pronunciations of the substituted terms do not change.

As well, the following syntax manifestation has both written and oral ramifications: *her or his* for *his or her* (but *he and sxe* for *he and she*). Such alpha order adjustments are rooted in the same feminist, critical theorist, and rationalist framework as the aforementioned. Indeed, when given a choice in virtually any series or listing of individuals or terms (phrases strike me as too complex)—that is when no specific order is referenced, intimated, or necessary for chronological or other reasons—alpha order is utilized given its logical, systematic, and functional presentation.

*Personal Background*

*Academic Background*

My personal journey also impacts my research stance. I am a 40-year-old African-American male, who grew up on a small family farm in Weir, Mississippi. I obtained my high school diploma from Louisville High School in Louisville, Mississippi; earned a bachelor of arts (BA) in African and Afro-American Studies and American History at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts; a Master of Science (MS) in Tourism and Travel Management and a Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) in Recreation Services and Resources Management at New York University in New York, New York; and am writing this work in partial completion of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Hospitality Administration at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas (UNLV) in Las Vegas, Nevada. The formation of my educational foundation in the officially integrated and socio-politically conservative Deep South, my heightened focus on heritage and self-exploration during maturation to adulthood in the bastion of
liberalism that is Brandeis, my hospitality introduction and development in the veritable
capital of the world, and my rigorous refinement in the simultaneously cosmopolitan and
insular environments of UNLV and Las Vegas all deeply affect who I am and how I
navigate reality. Indeed, my status as an underrepresented minority in advanced high
school classes, the ivory-like towers of Brandeis, the fascinating yet unwieldy behemoth
that is NYU in NYC, and the physical and cultural deserts of UNLV and the city of Las
Vegas complexly influence my world view.

Employment Background

In terms of industry employment, I worked for 6 ½ years essentially as a group
corporate travel agent and an operations manager with Travel Planners and its sister
company Quikbook, respectively, in New York City before teaching hospitality and
tourism full-time at Monroe College in New Rochelle and The Bronx, New York for
seven semesters and moving on to pursue my PhD.

I taught a Womyn’s Studies course entitled Gender, Race, and Class at UNLV for
four years—i.e. the majority of the time that I worked on my PhD. During my UNLV
tenure, I also developed and delivered an Afro-American Studies course, cross-listed in
Hotel Management, called Black Issues in Hospitality and Tourism. And I taught Human
Resource Management, among other business courses, during a year spent as Frederick
Douglass Teaching Scholar and Assistant Professor of Management at Bloomsburg
University of Pennsylvania. Certainly, constantly exploring the impact of such major
dimensions of diversity as gender, race, class, ability, age, and sexuality on the lived
experiences of Americans has influenced my standpoint.
Ableism, Classism, Racism, Ageism, Sexism, Heterosexism (ACRASH)

During the earlier years of my UNLV coursework and instruction, I developed a theoretical framework for expressing the core categories of difference which seem most influential in structuring the day-to-day realities of persons in the United States. Dubbed ACRASH for the component elements ableism, classism, racism, ageism, sexism, and heterosexism, this acronym and analogy was drafted to frame my instructional approach to Gender, Race, and Class. The central message of this conceptualization is that just as a reasonable person would choose to avoid a vehicle accident given the possibility of mental, physical, and monetary damage, so, too, should individuals and organizations avoid ACRASH in order to spare themselves and others potential pain, discomfort, and/or psychological and material expense. As a champion of diversity-related equity, this is the lens through which I consciously and continually gauge whether a particular context, proposition, or occurrence is just.

Personal Struggles and Research Commitment

Throughout many years of school, work, and social life, I have struggled with issues of ability, class, race, age, gender, and sexuality. Despite experiencing varying levels of privilege and disenfranchisement, it is clear to me that there is a huge divide between the economic and sociocultural haves and have nots. I choose to see these divisions because I refuse to pretend they do not exist as they constantly impact my life and the lives of untold others. I entered the research field with an acknowledgement of who I am and what my world view is because it is intensely relevant to my work. I was continually and keenly aware that it was important to minimize the degree to which my critical theoretical lens affected the information gathering process. While I could not and more importantly
chose not to change, I saw my perspective as most relevant in the latter analysis and reflection stages of the research process. I strived to see what my informants saw. However, I was aware of my Blackness and avoided allowing shared experiences to encourage particular responses or situational views. I also worked to share gathered information in an unbiased way before engaging in theoretical interpretation.

*Qualitative Perspective*

From a qualitative perspective, it is appropriate—even unavoidable—to begin a literature review with personal thoughts and feelings. While I was interested in uncovering the experience of SBHTPs who earn at least $100,000 annually from a single job, it was important to initially discuss my interest and what I thought I would find. Both my background as an African-American male and years of social inequality research have led me to expect that the experience of my study population would be far different from and substandard to similarly situated individuals in the dominant group.

While personal knowledge and previous work render me curious about population parameters like gender, race, intercultural relations, educational and employment history, perceptions of equity/fairness, and feelings/emotions, I was committed to providing ample opportunity for participants to tell their stories. For the qualitative integrity of this work, it was important that respondents taught me what is important and/or interesting about their paths, rather than presuming to know what matters most. Although it was impossible for me to separate who I am and what I know from the research process, it was vital that I acknowledged idiosyncrasies that might influence these information exchanges. While it was helpful to use my particularities to enhance information
discovery and comprehension, it was critical that the subject area experts whose experiences and perspectives I sought played the major role in shaping conversations.

Revolutionary Aspirations

It is also imperative to disclose that I am a revolutionary—at least in terms of hospitality and tourism scholarship. My critical theoretical perspective and life experience render me “critical of social organization that privileges some at the expense of others” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 21). I believe the way American society is currently organized is unjust. Indeed, I would not be doing this research if I did not suspect that, even among such an economically well off population, a certain measure of powerlessness, inequality, and injustice exists. Furthermore, my intent is to affect radical change in the social structure by boosting and promulgating evidence that gender and racial inequality are debilitating and pervasive in corporate America.

Research Anticipations

Although my suspicions and feelings in this area are quite strong, I was fully committed to uncovering and sharing whatever truth the data revealed. While I did not expect to find a lot of information contrary to my presumption, I was completely open to this possibility. I figured, for example, that my study population might be a particularly exceptional group that has benefited from affirmative action and other advantages that render them better off than their White counterparts. They might be so comfortable in their positions and social/work environments that they feel they are treated as equals in every way. They might describe their workforce status as privileged and far above what they ever imagined, and they might feel that they would not be any better off if they were White. They might, in fact, believe they would be worse off because they would lack the
uniqueness that helped propel them to the upper echelons of their organizations. Their relations with other Blacks might be no better, or even worse than those with Whites. The femyles, too, might feel they are lucky and privileged at a time when society feels obligated to right past wrongs by giving them the kind of support and mentoring they need to outperform their male counterparts. They might feel they are better compensated than their counterparts because they have more choices since they are in high demand.

So while I could not separate who and what I am from the research process, part of who I am is open-minded and fair, though arguably as prejudiced and biased as the next researcher. My commitment to honesty and openness, therefore, helped relay what I saw, heard, and otherwise perceived rather than what I imagined or felt I knew to be the case.

**Research Approach**

The genesis of this research problem was (1) alarm over the magnitude and asymmetric consistency of income disparity between men and womyn as well as Whites and minorities despite educational attainment, and (2) the scant attention these issues have received in the technical and non-technical hospitality and tourism literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although I was initially uncertain about how to approach this topic, Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) advice that research itself, or the process of conducting initial interviews and observations, can lead researchers to determine which issues are important or problematic for respondents was instructive. They maintain, indeed, that the “acid test of paying attention to respondents’ concerns is the key to where the focus of a research project should be” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 38).

I feel strongly that this seemingly reverse process lends legitimacy to my qualitative, grounded theory approach. While I could not and should not have divorced who I am and
what I know from the exploratory process, it also seemed counterproductive to mindlessly fill my head with others’ explanations and ideas about high-salaried Black executives. The issue, however, was not whether to conduct a literature review but as Strauss and Corbin (1998) state “how [the literature] can be used to enhance, rather than constrain, theory development” (p. 49). The grounded theory literature review process, after all, may be different from what many researchers are used to since,

There is no need to review all of the literature in the field beforehand, as is frequently done by analysts using other research approaches. It is impossible to know prior to the investigation what the salient problems will be or what theoretical concepts will emerge. Also, the researcher does not want to be so steeped in the literature that he or she is constrained and even stifled by it (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 49).

Since all that I had read, researched, taught, and experienced informed my approach and helped shape the process, it made sense to begin by gathering information relevant to my current thinking. After all, there were reasons why I believed what I believed and felt what I felt. Presenting supporting evidence might help readers and potential critics appreciate that my feelings were not merely prejudices or gut reactions, but grounded in scholarly and other discourse. As this research project progressed, it was interesting to see how the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and realities I encountered in the field compared with my preliminary thinking and subsequent data-based literature examination.

One other note: While this is perhaps the greatest time in American history for Black-White relations (and intercultural relations broadly) and I feel strongly that most Whites do not have actively racist feelings and most Blacks do not harbor ill feelings toward Whites, I do feel the sociohistoric reality of the U.S. has resulted in residual feelings of
passive (Tatum, 2004) and aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004) on the part of Whites and wariness and suspicion on the part of Blacks (Livers & Caver, 2003).

I strive continually to fully engage people of all races and ethnicities as individuals. I would be disingenuous, however, if I did not acknowledge that I have trust issues with Whites, and often feel that I am treated unequally and unfairly by the powers that be and have to work harder with fewer resources than many Whites to achieve the same goals. At some point, this is an issue of wealth versus income. Even when Blacks and Whites are “matched with regard to individual key characteristics such as salaries, schooling, jobs, family status, and age” for example, the reality of White wealth versus Black wealth often renders the latter significantly disadvantaged (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006, p. 131).

Definition of Terms

Because many of the key terms I engage have diverse meanings to diverse populations, it makes sense to begin with clear definitions that guide this research.

**Black**

Where possible, the term *Black* rather than *African-American* is deliberately used to highlight the reality that many of the individuals in the U.S. that are commonly considered *Black* are not U.S. citizens and, therefore, may not consider themselves African-American. While Blackness is difficult to define and, arguably, even more challenging to verify, the intent here is to include any individual who is commonly visually perceived to be a member of the Negroid race and/or who has been designated Black by virtue of a birth certificate. Black in this work specifically denotes members “of the Black race distinguished from members of other races by usu. inherited physical and physiological characteristics without regard to language or culture; *esp:* a member
belonging to the African branch of the Black race” (Merriam-Webster’s, 2001, p. 776). Whenever the term is used as a racial classification, the decision has been made to capitalize it, in the same way that racial designations such as American Indian, Asian, and Pacific Islander are. Likewise, the racial designation White is consistently capitalized.

In the context of the present study, a Black person is operationalized as an individual who can immediately be identified as Black via a visual assessment of skin tone and other physical attributes like eye color, hair texture, lip prominence, and nose shape; whose online photos and/or biographical information clearly suggests that he or sxe is Black; and/or who is referred by a trusted person in at least one of the other categories. In addition, each of the participants in the current study personally identifies as Black.

Drawing loosely on skin color bias research, my academic definition of Blackness is the existence of a preponderance of Afrocentric phenotypic characteristics (Bodenhorn, 2006; Cunningham, 1997; Herring, 2002; Hill, 2002; Hochschild & Weaver, 2007; Thompson & Keith, 2001), a distinctive and shared cultural and historical identity and reality (Gullickson, 2003; Herring, 2002; Hill, 2002), and/or a blood link to a descendant no more than two generations removed who can thusly be classified. While choice à la Cunningham (1997) is an interesting concept, it is imperative that Black be defined definitively and practically enough that individual inclusion and exclusion is not optional or irrational.

_Hospitality and Tourism_

According to Walker (1999, p. 33), “Tourism can be defined as the science, art, and business of attracting and transporting visitors, accommodating them, and graciously catering to their needs and wants”. Mathieson and Wall (1982) suggest tourism activity
relates to ‘the temporary movement to destinations outside the normal home and
workplace, the activities undertaken during the stay and the facilities created to cater for
the needs of the tourist.’ Mathieson and Wall’s work seems to be based in part on the
work of Burkart and Medlik (1981) who view tourism as “an important humyn activity
not only of economic significance, but also of social, political, cultural, and educational
significance.” Burkart and Medlik further define modern tourism as “a highly complex
phenomenon [that] involves the activities and interests not only of large transport
undertakings, owners of tourist sites and attractions, and of various tourist services at the
destination, but also of central and local government.”

Although hospitality and tourism are often used interchangeably, hospitality is a
much broader term that encompasses the “development from the ancient custom of
breaking bread with a passing stranger to the operations of today’s multifaceted
hospitality conglomerates.” Indeed, “the word hospitality comes from hospice, an old
French word meaning ‘to provide care/shelter for travelers’” (Walker, 1999, p. 4). The
modern-day scope of hospitality or tourism encompasses several interrelated components,
which fall under four main categories and a number of subcategories: (1) Travel – air,
cruise, rail, coach, automobile, (2) Lodging – hotels motels, etc., (3) Foodservice –
restaurants and foodservice, and (4) Recreation and Business – attractions, gaming,
parks, and recreation plus meetings, conventions, and expositions (Walker, 1999).

In this text hospitality and tourism is an umbrella term used to encompass a wide
range of lodging, foodservice, travel, and recreation and leisure occupations included in
the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics’ “leisure and hospitality
supersector” (United States Department of Labor, 2004). Eligible study participants must
be employed in operations classified under one of the following areas: arts, entertainment, and recreation; food services and drinking places; and hotels and other accommodations. Acceptable occupation categories are limited to the following extensive designations from the Bureau (United States Department of Labor, 2004):

*Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation*

The arts, entertainment, and recreation hospitality and tourism area includes jobs in the following fields: Management, business, and financial occupations; General and operations managers; Professional and related occupations; Archivists, curators, and museum technicians; Service occupations; Gaming surveillance officers and gaming investigators; Security guards, Cooks and food preparation workers; Bartenders; Fast food and counter workers; Waiters and waitresses; Building cleaning workers; Landscaping and groundskeeping workers; Supervisors, personal care and service workers; Animal care and service workers; Gaming services workers; Ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket takers; Amusement and recreation attendants; Tour and travel guides; Child care workers; Fitness trainers and aerobics instructors; Recreation workers; Sales and related occupations; Cashiers; Gaming change persons and booth cashiers; Counter and rental clerks; Office and administrative support occupations; Gaming cage workers; Receptionists and information clerks; Secretaries and administrative assistants; Office clerks, general; Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations; Maintenance and repair workers, general; Transportation and material moving occupations; Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand. (The following Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation occupation categories were purposely excluded: Actors, producers, and
directors; Athletes, coaches, umpires, and related workers; Dancers and choreographers; Musicians and singers.)

**Food Services and Drinking Places**

The food services and drinking places hospitality and tourism area includes jobs in the following fields: Management, business, and financial occupations; General and operations managers; Food service managers; Service occupations; Security guards; Chefs and head cooks; First-line supervisors / managers of food preparation and serving workers; Cooks, fast food; Cooks, institution and cafeteria; Cooks, restaurant; Cooks, short order; Food preparation workers; Bartenders; Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food; Counter attendants, cafeteria, food concession, and coffee shop; Waiters and waitresses; Food servers, nonrestaurant; Dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers; Dishwashers; Hosts and hostesses, restaurant, lounge, and coffee shop; Janitors and cleaners; Sales and related occupations; Cashiers; Retail salespersons; Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks; Office clerks, general; Transportation and material moving occupations; Driver / sales workers; Truck drivers, light or delivery services.

**Hotels and Other Accommodations**

The hotels and other accommodations hospitality and tourism area includes jobs in the following fields: Management, business, and financial occupations; Top executives; Sales managers; Food service managers; Lodging managers; Service occupations; Security guards; Chefs and head cooks; First-line supervisors managers of food preparation and serving workers; Cooks, restaurant; Food preparation workers; Bartenders; Fast food and counter workers; Waiters and waitresses; Food servers,
nonrestaurant; Dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers; Dishwashers; Hosts and hostesses, restaurant, lounge, and coffee shop; First-line supervisors managers of housekeeping and janitorial workers; Janitors and cleaners; Maid and housekeeping cleaners; Landscaping and groundskeeping workers; First-line supervisors managers, gaming workers; Gaming dealers; Amusement and recreation attendants; Baggage porters and bellhops; Recreation workers; Sales and related occupations; Cashiers; Gaming change persons and booth cashiers; Office and administrative support occupations; First-line supervisors managers of office and administrative support workers; Bookkeeping accounting, and auditing clerks; Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks; Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks; Secretaries and administrative assistants; Office clerks, general; Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations; Maintenance and repair workers, general; Production occupations; Laundry and dry-cleaning workers; Transportation and material moving occupations; Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand.

Educational Services

The educational services hospitality and tourism area includes jobs in the following fields: Hospitality and tourism related (HTR)* management, business, and financial occupations; HTR education administrators, elementary and secondary school; HTR education Administrators, post secondary; HTR professional and related occupations; HTR post secondary teachers; HTR secondary school teachers; HTR vocational education teachers. (*The hospitality and tourism-related distinctions do not appear in the Bureau of Labor Statistics data, but were added for the purposes of this study.)
Air Transportation

The air transportation hospitality and tourism area includes jobs in the following fields: Management, business, and financial occupations; Top executives; Transportation, storage, and distribution managers; Training and development specialists; Professional and related occupations; Computer specialists; Aerospace engineers; Aerospace engineering and operations technicians; Service occupations; Baggage porters and bellhops; Flight attendants; Sales and related occupations; Office and administrative support occupations; First-line supervisors managers of office and administrative support workers; Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks; Customer service representatives; Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks; Cargo and freight agents; Production, planning, and expediting clerks; Stock clerks and order fillers; Secretaries and administrative assistants; Office clerks, general; Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations; First-line supervisors managers of mechanics, installers, and repairers; Avionics technicians; Aircraft mechanics and service technicians; All other vehicle and mobile equipment mechanics, installers, and repairers; Maintenance and repair workers, general; Transportation and material moving occupations; Aircraft cargo handling supervisors; Airline pilots, copilots, and flight engineers; Commercial pilots; Airfield operations specialists; Transportation inspectors; All other related transportation workers; Cleaners of vehicles and equipment; Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand; Material moving workers, all other.
**HTR Advertising and Public Relations Services Occupations**

The advertising and public relations services occupations hospitality and tourism area includes all jobs in this field related to hospitality and tourism.

**Employment Services**

The employment services hospitality and tourism area includes jobs in the following fields: HTR management, business, and financial occupations; HTR human resources, training, and labor relations specialists; HTR professional and related occupations.

**Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services**

The management, scientific, and technical consulting services hospitality and tourism area includes jobs in the following fields: HTR management, business, and financial occupations; HTR chief executives; HTR general and operations managers; HTR marketing and sales managers; HTR market research analysts; HTR sales and related occupations; HTR telemarketers; HTR financial managers; HTR administrative services managers; HTR computer and information system managers; HTR employment, recruitment, and placement specialists; HTR management analysts; All other HTR business operations specialists.

**Federal Government**

The federal government hospitality and tourism area includes jobs in the following fields: Transportation Department; other HTR employees.

**State and Local Government**

The state and local government hospitality and tourism area includes jobs in the following fields: Transportation occupations; Bus Drivers, transit, and intercity;
Recreation workers; HTR management, business, and financial occupations; HTR chief executives; HTR general and operations managers.

Salaried Professional

For the purposes of this study, the term salary is defined as “fixed compensation paid regularly for services” (Merriam-Webster’s, 2001). Technically, “[c]ompensation refers to any payments made to, or on behalf of employees, as remuneration for employment [and all] forms of compensation are covered, including salary, overtime pay, bonuses, stock options, profit sharing and bonus plans, life insurance, vacation and holiday pay, cleaning or gasoline allowances, hotel accommodations, reimbursement for travel expenses, and benefits” (“United States Equal Employment,” 2000, ¶ 5). In distinguishing salaried professionals who earn at least $100,000 annually for this project, however, the intent is to focus exclusively on individuals who receive the qualifying amount in fixed, monetary compensation from a single job.

Compensation Discrimination

Discrimination can take several forms. It can occur when a person is excluded from an employment opportunity or treated less favorably than similarly situated persons because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin or citizenship status, disability, age, marital status, sexual orientation, prior arrest or conviction record, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or any basis prohibited by law. This type of discrimination is considered disparate treatment or a difference in treatment. Adverse impact discrimination results from neutral employment policies and practices that are applied evenly to all applicants or employees but have the effect of disproportionately excluding a group with a protected status (Discrimination Defined, 2002, ¶ 1).
Compensation discrimination considers all of the myriad elements of compensation and forms of discrimination in gauging whether an employer is illegally giving an employee less remuneration. Unlawful discrimination results in a violation of at least one of the following four major acts and subsequent amendments:

1. The Equal Pay Act of 1963
2. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
3. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and

Now that the study’s purpose, significance, and $100,000 rationale have been explicated, my background and research stance have been addressed, key terms have been defined, and a progressive syntax has been introduced, let us turn our attention to the customized literature review process.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Because of challenges in conducting a traditional literature review in a new subject area via a research approach that encourages investigators, where possible, to initiate participant conversations and then continually seek focused readings on emergent concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), a tailor-made method was developed. After a brief overview of some race- and gender-oriented compensation discrimination theories, this section explains this novel process and the foundational role my initial assumptions played in broaching a specifically sparse and tangentially cumbersome literature and subsequently framing participant interviews, data analysis, and research conclusions.

Racism translates into lower pay for equal work. Marable (2004) argues, for example, “Institutional racism in America’s economic system today means that the rhetoric of equal opportunity in the marketplace remains, in effect, a hoax for most people of color” (p. 161). Johnson (2004) submits that America is a male-dominated, patriarchal society where “positions of authority—political, economic, legal, religious, educational, military, domestic—are generally reserved for men” (p. 165). Smolkin (2004) adds, “The [wage] gap persists in part because most womyn remain concentrated in jobs traditionally considered ‘womyn’s work’ and undervalued by society” (p. 229). Johnson posits, moreover, that “As womyn’s numbers in male-dominated occupations increase, the prestige and income that go with them tend to decline” (Johnson, 2004, p. 169).

Compensation Discrimination Theory

A number of theories address the rationale for compensation discrimination in the U.S. Four that can be applied to race and gender, in particular, are: unconscious
discrimination theory, pollution discrimination theory, taste discrimination theory, and statistical discrimination theory.

Unconscious discrimination theory “posits that male managers making subjective judgments with inadequate guidance will favor other males, even if not deliberately or consciously so” (Harris & Boddy, 2004, ¶6). Rather than intentional mistreatment, the argument is that:

(1) stereotyping is a universal, cognitive process; (2) it can lead to gender bias; (3) gender bias is especially likely where (a) evaluation processes are subjective and discretionary, and (b) are made in a male-dominated environment; and (4) while there are policies and procedures which can minimize gender bias, without such policies, unconscious bias is likely to occur (Harris & Boddy, 2004, ¶7).

Certainly unconscious discrimination theory can be applied in any occupational context where a typically privileged group such as Whites, able-bodied persons, etc. is overwhelmingly represented at the managerial level relative to others.

According to pollution discrimination theory, hiring femyles may negatively impact the prestige of a formerly all-male occupation. Some fear the entry of individuals who belong to a group whose members are judged by a group average rather than individual merits will reduce the current level of prestige externally attributed (Goldin, 2002). “Men in an all-male occupations,” for example “might be hostile to allowing a womyn to enter their occupation even if the womyn meets the qualifications for entry” (Goldin, 2002, ¶3). This is because people in the wider society will be unaware that the womyn was qualified and might see her hire as a sign that the occupation has been adversely affected (Goldin, 2002). As in unconscious discrimination theory, pollution discrimination theory
can be used to explain a work environment where a systematically advantaged group holds the vast majority of managerial positions at the expense of others.

Lundberg and Startz (1983) discuss taste discrimination theory and statistical discrimination theory. Taste discrimination, they state, fundamentally claims that wage differentials are the result of preference by “majority employers, employees, and customers, but…should not generally persist in competitive markets” (p. 340). Statistical discrimination, on the other hand, maintains that “treating two groups of workers differently may be the rational response of firms to uncertainty about an individual’s productivity” (Lundberg & Startz, 1983, p. 340). While these theories seek to explicate the unfortunate reality for such habitually oppressed groups as racial minorities and womyn in corporate America, they do little to redress the imbalances.

Assumptions

Like most other scholars, I came to the table with some deep assumptions about my research population and project. After experiencing an extended period of inactivity and reaching an impasse about how to conduct a manageable and relevant literature review, I decided to use my assumptions in a systematic way to organize the literature review. Of course, in a literature as wide-ranging and as thoughtful as the modern African-American experience, there were authors who challenged my assumptions and writers who reinforced my beliefs. In the end, however, this process yielded a literature review method that at once acknowledges that scholars inevitably arrive on the investigative scene with pre-established assumptions and recognizes that these assumptions can be instrumental in guiding literature searches, parsing empirical findings, and making meaning out of collected data.
Ultimately, I organized my feelings into seven *pre-data collection assumptions* (See Figure 1), which were used to categorize the related literature. The first assumption is that men earn more than womyn, and Black men earn more than Black womyn. The second is that Whites earn more than Blacks, and Blacks earn less than the average while high-salaried Whites earn more than high-salaried Blacks, and high-salaried Blacks earn less than the high-salaried average. The third assumption is as follows:

Black employees feel the relationships with many of the White people they work with are strained or at least at lower or less desired levels than their relationships with other Blacks. That is, Blacks somehow constantly feel and know their blackness in part because it is continually made obvious to them that their counterparts feel and know this.

The fourth pre-data assumption is that high-salaried or upper management Blacks have more extensive educational backgrounds than their White counterparts or the average. The fifth is that high-salaried or upper management Blacks have more extensive employment backgrounds than their White counterparts or the average. The sixth assumption is that Blacks generally (as well as those who are high-salaried or in upper management) feel they have not been treated completely equitably and fairly over the course of their employment. The seventh pre-data collection assumption, finally, is that high-salaried or upper management Blacks feel accomplished, confident, and secure and are highly driven, though they believe racism is alive and well in the workplace.

*Pre-Data Collection Assumption #1:*

*Men earn more than womyn, and Black men earn more than Black womyn.*

Womyn on average earn less than the men in the American workforce. This seems to
1. Men earn more than womyn, and Black men earn more than Black womyn.

2. Whites earn more than Blacks, and Blacks earn less than the average while high-salaried Whites earn more than high-salaried Blacks, and high-salaried Blacks earn less than the high-salaried average.

3. Black employees feel the relationships with many of the White people they work with are strained or at least at lower or less desired levels than their relationships with other Blacks. That is, Blacks somehow constantly feel and know their Blackness in part because it is continually made obvious to them that their counterparts feel and know this.

4. High-salaried or upper management Blacks have more extensive educational backgrounds than their White counterparts or the average.

5. High-salaried or upper management Blacks have more extensive employment backgrounds than their White counterparts or the average.

6. Blacks generally (as well as those who are high-salaried or in upper management) feel they have not been treated completely equitably and fairly over the course of their employment.

7. High-salaried or upper management Blacks feel accomplished, confident, and secure and are highly driven, though they believe racism is alive and well in the workplace.

*Figure 1.* Pre-data collection assumptions utilized in framing the literature review, interviews, data analysis and conclusions.
be a constant finding, which holds across racial and ethnic groups ("National Committee on Pay," 2004). Indeed, the literature is replete with researchers and studies that generally conclude men earn more than womyn (Barnes, 2000; Benjamin, 1991; Cherry & Rodgers, 2000; Collins, 1997; Conrad, Whitehead, Mason, & Stewart, 2005; Craver, 2004; Gates, 2004; hooks, 2000; Livers & Caver, 2003; Rothenberg, 2004; Thurgood Marshall, 2006; Toutkoushian & Conley, 2005; Wilson, 1987; Yancy, 2001) and Black men earn more than Black womyn (Benjamin, 1991; Cherry & Rodgers, 2000; Collins, 1997; Dyson, 1996; Gates, 2004; Livers & Caver, 2003; Rothenberg, 2004; Thurgood Marshall, 2006; Yancy, 2001).

Unfortunately, Benjamin’s (1991) late 20th century statement that “males, Black or White, are more likely to be represented at the top of the social stratum” continues to be true (p. xx). Mutari, Figart, and Power’s (2001) main contention a decade later that “wages as a social practice” shape and reflect gender, race, and class realities may, in fact, be the truth that fair-minded Americans must confront. Black feminist scholar bell hooks (2000) indicates that income disparity is no small problem for femyles since “masses of womyn still do not receive wage equity with men” (p. 39). And, Michael Eric Dyson (1996) counsels folk, in particular, to “be mindful of the many plagues that mock the prosperity of black females” as “sexism and racism deliver a powerful one-two punch to the social aspirations of black women” (p. 208).

The most compelling evidence that males earn more than femyles and Black men earn more than Black womyn is Census data. As Table 1 indicates, males of all races, as a group, consistently earn above the average (Both Sexes, All Races) while femyles of all races, as a whole and across categories of educational attainment, uniformly earn below
the average. This table also shows that Black men make more than Black womyn at every level of educational attainment, and they even earn more than White femyles in every category, except the “doctorate degree,” where White womyn are paid a mere $228 more. While the male-femyle disparities are more complex once individual earnings reach six figures, Table 2 shows that males, as a group, ultimately earn $11,489 more than femyles, given their overall annual mean of $243,160 compared to $231,671 for all womyn who earn at least $100,000. Although it was a bit surprising to find that femyles in the $100,000 to $149,999 and $150,000 to $199,999 categories outpace their male counterparts by $594 and $638, respectively, it makes sense that in the highest income levels of $200,000 to $249,999 and $250,000 and above, men’s incomes exceed womyn’s by $300 and a whopping $46,857. Table 3 reveals that Black men at the highest income levels outpace Black womyn by a whopping $49,775, given their mean of $253,732 versus Black femyles’ annual earnings of $203,957. Black men earn more than Black womyn in three of the four upper income ranges specified, though Black femyles curiously earn $10,542 more than Black males in the $150,000 to $199,999 income division.

Of the total number of persons 15 years and older in the U.S in 2005, 51.47% were femyle and 48.53% were male. Despite the fact that femyles outnumbered males overall, in every income category of $100,000 or more, men are overwhelmingly represented and womyn are grossly underrepresented. As Table 4 illustrates, there is an inverse relationship between income category and femyle representation. While femyles barely represent a quarter of individuals who earn $100,000 to $149,999, for example, they make up less than 14% of those who earn $250,000 or more. The opposite, of course, is
true for males, who constitute nearly three-quarters of individuals with incomes of $100,000 to $149,999 and more than 86% of those earning at least $250,000.

So, not only do womyn earn less than men, far fewer femyles even fall into the highest income categories. This is in spite of the fact that femyles of all races who earn six figures appear to be more educated than their male counterparts. Table 5, for example, shows that Black femyles (83.08%), femyles of all races (81.30%), and White femyles (80.20%) hold more bachelor’s or higher degrees than the average (Both Sexes, All Races at 77.67%) while males of all races (76.81%), White males (75.74%), and Black males (72.69%) fall below the norm.

The existence of an overall gender income gap at levels of $100,000 and above suggests the same pattern may emerge in the current study. Interestingly, this data also hints that there may be little difference between the annual salaries of male and femyle research participants who earn $100,000 to $149,999, moderate variation between males and femyles from $150,000 to $199,999 and $200,000 to $249,000, and a significant gap between men and womyn who earn $250,000 and above (See Table 2). Given the potential magnitude of the male-femyle divide at the highest income category, it may be beneficial to specifically include enough persons of both genders at this level to make a proper comparison. Since different things are arguably occurring across the four income ranges, it may also be informative to theoretically sample at least two males and two femyles for each category. If feasible, such a research sample could shed light on whether the salaries of male and femyle HSBHTPs mirror the reality of the larger population and reflect virtually no gender differences at $100,000 to $149,000, a large femyle advantage at $150,000 to $199,999, a large male advantage at $200,000 to $249,999, and a colossal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Less than 9th Grade</th>
<th>9th – 12th Grade (Incl Nongrad GED)</th>
<th>Grad</th>
<th>Some College Degree</th>
<th>Assoc. Degree</th>
<th>Bachelor’s Degree</th>
<th>Master’s Degree</th>
<th>Profess. Degree</th>
<th>Doctorate Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Sexes, White AOIC</td>
<td>$40,401</td>
<td>$20,746</td>
<td>$25,779</td>
<td>$32,410</td>
<td>$38,488</td>
<td>$41,110</td>
<td>$51,517</td>
<td>$61,378</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$77,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Sexes, All Races</td>
<td>$39,509</td>
<td>$20,828</td>
<td>$25,130</td>
<td>$31,610</td>
<td>$37,150</td>
<td>$40,616</td>
<td>$50,959</td>
<td>$61,324</td>
<td>$98,645</td>
<td>$79,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male, Black AOIC</td>
<td>$35,531</td>
<td>$23,783</td>
<td>$23,662</td>
<td>$28,940</td>
<td>$36,908</td>
<td>$42,207</td>
<td>$46,050</td>
<td>$57,258</td>
<td>$102,500*</td>
<td>$67,250*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femyle, White AOIC</td>
<td>$34,268</td>
<td>$16,047</td>
<td>$20,337</td>
<td>$26,940</td>
<td>$31,684</td>
<td>$34,577</td>
<td>$42,014</td>
<td>$51,299</td>
<td>$82,075</td>
<td>$67,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femyle, All Races</td>
<td>$33,351</td>
<td>$16,159</td>
<td>$20,180</td>
<td>$26,372</td>
<td>$34,026</td>
<td>$42,173</td>
<td>$51,463</td>
<td>$80,704</td>
<td>$66,549</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Less than 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Grad</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; – 12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Grad</td>
<td>Some College Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Profess. Degree</td>
<td>Doctorate Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Sexes, Femyle, Black AOIC</td>
<td>$32,066</td>
<td>$21,108</td>
<td>$21,335</td>
<td>$26,237</td>
<td>$32,425</td>
<td>$35,697</td>
<td>$45,520</td>
<td>$52,792</td>
<td>$80,750</td>
<td>$66,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black AOIC</td>
<td>$30,677</td>
<td>$17,500</td>
<td>$19,032</td>
<td>$23,985</td>
<td>$30,386</td>
<td>$31,352</td>
<td>$45,186</td>
<td>$49,923</td>
<td>$69,750*</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *Median computed via US Census Bureau formula. Initially not provided since base is <75,000.

Table 2

Male and Femyle Income Distribution, $100,000 to $250,000 or more: 2005, People 15 Years and Over, All Races

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>% of All Males</th>
<th>Mean All Males</th>
<th>% of All Femyles</th>
<th>Mean All Femyles</th>
<th># All Males</th>
<th># Femyles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 to 149,999</td>
<td>4.42%</td>
<td>$116,237</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
<td>$116,831</td>
<td>4,997</td>
<td>1,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 to 199,999</td>
<td>1.46%</td>
<td>$165,431</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
<td>$166,069</td>
<td>1,648</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 to 249,999</td>
<td>0.56%</td>
<td>$213,963</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
<td>$213,633</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250,000 and above</td>
<td>1.02%</td>
<td>$477,009</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td>$430,152</td>
<td>1,152</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,462</td>
<td>$243,160</td>
<td></td>
<td>$231,671</td>
<td>8,433</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

Male and Femyle Upper Income Distribution: 2005, People 15 Years and Over, Black A.O.I.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th># Black Males</th>
<th>% of Subgroup</th>
<th># Black Femyles</th>
<th>% of Subgroup</th>
<th>Black Male Means</th>
<th>Femyle Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 to $149,999</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1.64%</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>$115,866</td>
<td>$114,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 to $199,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
<td>161,727*</td>
<td>172,269*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 to $249,999</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.12%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>216,938*</td>
<td>209,333*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250,000 and above</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
<td>520,395*</td>
<td>319,750*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
<td>185</td>
<td></td>
<td>$253,732</td>
<td>$203,957</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Author calculated mean, dividing aggregate income by number of individuals in income range. Information initially excluded since base is < 75,000.
Table 4

Male and Femyle Upper Income Distribution: 2005, People 15 Years & Over, All Races

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$100,000 to $149,999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>74.50</td>
<td>4,997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femyles</td>
<td>25.50</td>
<td>1,710</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$150,000 to $199,999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>79.15</td>
<td>1,648</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femyles</td>
<td>20.85</td>
<td>434</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$200,000 to $249,999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>82.38</td>
<td>636</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femyles</td>
<td>17.62</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$250,000 and above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>86.36</td>
<td>1,152</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femyles</td>
<td>13.64%</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From the United States Census Bureau (2006b), Table PINC-11, Income Distribution to $250,000 or More: 2005. Numbers in thousands.
Table 5

Educational Attainment by Sex and Race, Percent of Persons Earning $100,000 and Above, Total in Descending Order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Less Than 9th</th>
<th>9th - 12th Graduate</th>
<th>Some Degree</th>
<th>Bachelor's Degree</th>
<th>Master's Degree</th>
<th>Profess. Degree</th>
<th>Doctorate Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Femyles</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.38%</td>
<td>1.76%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>83.08%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femyles, All Races</td>
<td>1,556</td>
<td>0.13%</td>
<td>0.45%</td>
<td>6.11%</td>
<td>7.39%</td>
<td>4.56%</td>
<td>81.30%</td>
<td>34.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Femyles</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.39%</td>
<td>6.65%</td>
<td>8.14%</td>
<td>4.62%</td>
<td>80.20%</td>
<td>34.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Sexes, All Races</td>
<td>7,896</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
<td>7.74%</td>
<td>8.81%</td>
<td>4.79%</td>
<td>77.67%</td>
<td>37.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Less Than 9th</td>
<td>Grade 9th (Incl Nongrad Ged)</td>
<td>9th Grade Nongrad Ged</td>
<td>Less Than 12th Graduate (Incl No Coll)</td>
<td>Total Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>Profess. Doctorate</td>
<td>Total Some Coll. Assoc. Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males, All</td>
<td>6,330</td>
<td>6.46%</td>
<td>0.62%</td>
<td>8.12%</td>
<td>9.17%</td>
<td>4.83%</td>
<td>76.81%</td>
<td>37.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Males</td>
<td>5,652</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
<td>8.39%</td>
<td>9.68%</td>
<td>5.17%</td>
<td>75.74%</td>
<td>38.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Males</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
<td>0.88%</td>
<td>11.01%</td>
<td>9.25%</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
<td>72.69%</td>
<td>26.43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

male advantage at $250,000 and above.

Of course, the male-femyle wage/income gap is not new. Charles Craver (2004) declares that full-time womyn’s annual earnings have trailed those of full-time men for years. He notes that although the gender gap has narrowed recently to nearly 80% as more femyles have entered traditionally male professions, the wage differential remains significant. While Carver attributes some of the wage gap to the continual concentration of womyn in historically feminine jobs and the reality that femyles are more likely to take time off from paid work for parental obligations, he also cites (1) womyn’s reluctance to believe they deserve more, (2) their disinclination to use bargaining skills to attain larger salary increases, and (3) womyn’s fear of being perceived negatively if they challenge stereotypical supervisory expectations and act too much like their male counterparts.

After discovering the starting salaries of femyle graduates were 7.6% lower than those of male graduates, Linda Babcock, a PhD program director at a major university, found that while only 7% of womyn requested more money after receiving job offers, 57% of men did so (Craver, 2004). Many of the gender-based differences Babcock found are explained by studies of the dichotomous acculturation process in children. For example, boys are encouraged to be independent and taught that they can control their lives while compliant behavior and a perception of less control over personal situations is nourished in girls. Indeed, the social expectation for males to be ‘assertive, dominant, decisive, ambitious, and self-oriented’ while femyles are ‘warm, expressive, nurturing, emotional, and friendly’ perpetuates gender-based occupational segregation and significantly different compensation expectations and outcomes (Craver, 2004, p. 1107).
Additional support for the notion that men earn more than womyn is available in a 2005 study by Toutkoushian and Conley, which ultimately concludes that significant pay differentials continue to exist in some areas of academe and womyn with comparable qualifications to men, as a whole, receive lower salaries. While many are quick to rationalize these discrepancies, the report specifically examines the unexplained wage gap—“the portion that cannot be attributed to differences in worker characteristics that should affect salary” (Toutkoushian & Conley, 2005, pp. 1-2). And, although these authors discover there has been a considerable decrease in the overall unexplained wage gap over time and there is no longer a statistical substantiation of pay differences between males and femyles in doctoral-level or liberal arts institutions, the reality and direction of gender-based disparity in academe in general remains fundamentally unchanged.

A closer look at a specific case reveals much about the dynamics of these developments. A federal jury recently found that a Kennesaw State University professor in Georgia—the only femyle instructor with tenure in the department—not only had been paid less than her male counterparts but also had been subject to illegal discrimination and such retaliatory actions as loss of professional duties, a negative job evaluation, and being passed over for a promotion when sxe complained. The plaintiff was awarded $760,000 in back pay and $300,000 in damages (“Couple Seeks,” 2004).

A 2006 Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund report, which included a comparison of male and femyle faculty salaries at 45 public historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and overall average faculty salaries at these HBCUs versus those at majority public institutions revealed that while femyles at HBCUs earned less than males across all academic ranks (full professor, associate professor, assistant professor, and instructor)
and HBCU faculty, who are largely Black, on average earn less than faculty at majority public institutions, the most glaring inequities exist at the highest salary levels. For example, femyle full professors at these HBCUs received more than $19,500 less than their male counterparts, while HBCU full professors in general are paid nearly $34,000 less than majority public institution faculty.

Cobbs and Turnock (2003) identify part of the basis of lower pay and other inequities for Black womyn in their assertion that “For African-American womyn, the complexity is compounded. [They] are outsiders as both blacks and womyn. [They] shoulder the negative stereotypes of race as well as those of gender” (pp. 3-4). Cobbs and Turnock maintain, “In today’s world,…gender-related issues can often be more difficult to address than those of race…To begin with, many men—and womyn—across every race, class, and age line do not perceive the problem” (p. 24). They submit that “Black womyn, even more than black men, are still relatively new in the corridors of real power” (p. 154).

Livers and Caver (2003) go out of their way to spotlight gender in their contention that Black men and womyn “are having very different experiences in the workplace” since the combination of gender and race commonly results in inequalities in “access to important, or ‘visible,’ projects and people, promotions, and explicit and implicit job responsibilities” in addition to salary (pp. 75-76). Livers and Caver (2003) submit that womyn in general are stereotyped as supportive, cooperative, and nurturing, but overly emotional sexual objects that are “less competent than their male counterparts, often because they are believed to be less committed to their jobs and because they are said to be lacking in experience. Additionally, womyn are often maligned or even penalized for pushing their behavior beyond boundaries others have set” (pp. 77-78). Livers and Caver
(2003) argue that Black womyn, in particular, “are often considered too aggressive, too
direct, too assertive, and too flashy for mainstream corporate America,” though they point
out that such “assertive, independent, and self-confident” behavior is positively
associated with White men (p. 78).

Jacobsen and Levin (2000) blame glass-ceiling effects in addition to overt
discrimination, humyn-capital differences, and occupational and industrial distribution
disparities for the disproportionate under-representation of womyn (and minorities) in the
top paying and most-powerful jobs. They use the term glass ceiling to refer to situations
in which discrimination is manifested not in unequal pay by race or sex in a particular
job category, but rather in differing probabilities of advancement to higher-paying job
categories for persons who are equivalent in all productivity-related characteristics
but of different race and / or sex (Jacobsen & Levin, 2000, p. 219).

“If this situation occurs,” they continue, “glass-ceiling effects will be evident not only in
lower promotion probabilities, but also in lower returns to tenure and experience” (p.
219). Jacobsen and Levin (2000) argue, for example, that the increased number of
womyn with high levels of employment experience and greater amounts of firm tenure in
the 1990s failed to pay off in terms of improved earnings parity with White males. The
grand conclusion of their study is that “Both college-graduate and noncollege graduate
white men have the highest returns to experience of any group, leading to greater
combined returns for white men relative to all other groups” (p. 229).

In Gates’ (2004) dialogues examining the role of class differences within the Black
community, the prolific actress Nia Long asserts that “[w]ether you’re black, white,
purple, or yellow, [things are] harder for womyn’ (p. 224). While Barnes (2000) agrees
“it is still true that equally qualified and experienced womyn are often paid less than men,” sxe believes “black womyn suffer a double disadvantage in the workplace” (p. 89). Contrary to the popular notion that Black femyles benefit more from affirmative action than Black males since “they fall into two federally regulated categories,” Collins (1997) insists “The joint effects of race and sex discrimination made black womyn largely absent in the higher-paying ranks of management and, indeed, the last to benefit from federal affirmative-action legislation” (p. 14).

Although most agree that men remain ahead “[b]y any objective measure—pay, representation in boardrooms, status” (Elia, 2001, p. 339), Cornel West partially blames the relative inattention to Black womyn’s distinctive plight on ‘the pitfalls of racial reasoning.’ This, according to McGary (2001) is the view that “authentic Black people have Black solidarity, and…certain subgroups (like Black womyn) must subordinate their particular interests and rights for the general good of the Black community in an anti-Black racist society” (p. 288). bell hooks (1990) rhetorically inquires, “Cannot black womyn remain seriously concerned about the brutal effect of racist domination on black men and also denounce black male sexism?” (p. 62). Sxe maintains that anyone who is committed to resisting and eradicating gender and racial oppression appreciates the importance of not propagating a competition between the domineering systems as confrontation is equally critical on both fronts.
Pre-data Collection Assumption #2:

Whites earn more than Blacks, and Blacks earn less than the average while high-salaried Whites earn more than high-salaried Blacks, and high-salaried Blacks earn less than the high-salaried average.

Evidence that Whites typically earn more than Blacks is equally as pervasive as literature suggesting men generally earn more than womyn. A host of researchers (including Barnes, 2000; Benjamin, 1991; Cherry & Rodgers, 2000; Collins, 1997; Conrad, et al, 2005; Cose, 1993; Dyson, 2004; Dyson, 2006; Gates, 2004; Hare, 2002; Isaac & See, 2001; Livers & Caver, 2003; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Pierre, 1998; Rothenberg, 2004; Teele, 2002, Thurgood Marshall, 2006; West, 1999; and Wilson, 1987) agree that Whites are compensated at higher levels than Blacks across the board. While Cherry and Rodgers (2000) state that minorities’ relative wage disadvantages can be tied to lower financial returns to tenure and experience, for example, Jacobsen and Levin (2000) specifically indict blatant discrimination, humyn-capital differences, and disparate occupational and industrial distributions in addition to the increasing relevance of glass-ceiling effects in explaining earnings discrepancies. And, though many researchers clearly agree with Collins (1997) that the fiscal status of Blacks still significantly trails that of Whites, Nia Long voices the sentiment of many by insisting that her pay would be substantially greater if sxe were White (Gates, 2004).

As in the case of men versus womyn, however, the clearest evidence of Whites’ domination over Blacks in terms of income is Census data. Table 2 shows that across all levels of educational attainment, except less than 9th grade, White males and femyles together have higher median incomes than Black males and femyles, as a unit. This table
also reveals that White males earn more than Black males at every level except

professional degree, where Black males have a $2,500 advantage, and less than 9th grade,

where they outpace White males by $1,622. At the same time, White females earn more
than Black females at every point, except the bachelor’s degree level, where Black
females receive an astonishing $8,945 more and less than 9th grade, where the Black
female advantage is $1,453.

Pre-data Collection Assumption #3:

Black employees feel the relationships with many of the White people they work with
are strained or at least at lower or less desired levels than their relationships with other
Blacks. That is, Blacks somehow constantly feel and know their Blackness in part
because it is continually made obvious to them that their counterparts feel and know this.

Harsh as it may seem, there is strong research support for this contention. Lois
Benjamin (1991), in fact, characterizes this feeling as everpresent. The collective
sentiment of the elite professionals in her study is that they are detrimentally Black in a
racist social order despite high status, abundant privilege, and objective success. Even in
situations where workplace relationships with Whites are warm and cordial, Benjamin
notes that this office-inspired sociability does not continue beyond the business day as
churches, communities, and schools remain largely divided by color. Although middle-
and upper-class Blacks are increasingly likely to live in White neighborhoods, they often
continue to have limited interaction with their White neighbors and be concerned about
things like where they will be seated in a restaurant or whether they will be treated
courteously. Benjamin points out that 62% of her Talented One Hundred respondents
identified their social contacts or friends as Black and reported feeling more comfortable
and secure with them since they wanted release time from race watching or monitoring what they said or did in front of Whites. One femyle commented, for example, ‘I don’t believe in discussing my private life with White people…I don’t trust what they’ll do with the information’ (p. 146). A male explained ‘I have Black and White friends, but I have a deeper relationship with my Black friends than my White friends. We share more in common’ (p. 146). While Benjamin found the majority of her participants belonged to racially mixed organizations as well as all-Black groups, sxe found the Black elite’s social contacts to be mainly Black, while their business and professional contacts were 60% mixed, 26% White, and only 12% Black. This finding, sxe believes, suggest bidirectional segregation outside the workplace.

In their study of 32 executives, Cobbs and Turnock (2003) submit that reconciling subordinate, peer, and managerial perception with how one regards oneself is an additional concern for Blacks. They explain that years of experience in an environment that sees Blacks as a bundle of mostly negative stereotypes, rather than individuals, breeds wariness and makes it hard to develop trust. Cobbs and Turnock argue that Whites are likely to be equally, if not more, uncomfortable and distrustful since they have fewer meaningful interracial experiences.

Cobbs and Turnock (2003) also posit that corporate Blacks have the intensely personal and never-ending second job of developing strategies to manage their own conscious/unconscious discomfort in addition to the uneasiness of colleagues, while dealing with potentially stereotypical responses. While they concede that it is not a concern in every situation, they caution that race is the most obstinate of issues that require one’s time and energy. Cobbs and Turnock (2003) warn ambitious Blacks to be
aware, for example, of Whites’ “averted eyes, indifference...too-jovial laugh and hostility” (p. 8). Despite his acknowledgement that others are conflicted because of his race, Don Brown, one of Cobbs and Turnock’s respondents, concentrates “on his work and the work of others, to improve his performance and theirs [and] by sheer will and focus...moves others beyond the issue of race” (p. 9). Though this may be an effective coping mechanism, this attention could be more productively directed toward work.

Cobbs and Turnock (2003) refer to this unfortunate reality as a daily struggle “just to turn down the background noise of ‘You are inferior,’ however muted, in order to function effectively” (p. 27). Although experience and time have shifted the bias to a less conscious level, thinly veiled negative assumptions—Blacks are less prepared, not as intelligent, supplanting more qualified White men—persist despite what resumes illustrate and performance demonstrates (Cobbs & Turnock, 2003).

Regarding Black employees’ feelings about relationships with White coworkers, Livers and Caver (2003) note that Blacks are regularly reminded via jokes, ostensibly innocuous statements, work assignments, and office relationships not only that they are different but that the difference is not positive. And, while most workplaces do not allow blatant discrimination, subliminally they remain unwelcoming to Blacks, femyles, and other managerial minorities (Livers & Caver, 2003).

Though they employ the term ever present like Lois Benjamin (1991), Livers and Caver (2003) ultimately refer to “the murky atmosphere of misperception and distortion in which black managers must work” as miasma. They describe this milieu as “a low-lying cloud, surrounding those who have to bear extra burdens and exert extra energy in ways that are not directly related to the work itself” (p. 17). Livers and Caver explain that
corporate Blacks respond to it cautiously with a perceived self-defensive posture and a disbursement of energy and time that is stifling and even counterproductive. They believe miasma is produced by the infusion of variance in a particular context and the reaction. This initiation and response renders benign aspects of difference, like identity, potentially problematic and rife with misperception and misapprehension (Livers & Caver, 2003).

Livers and Caver (2003) see trust as critical for Blacks both in personal and professional relationship terms. They argue the saga of slavery and discrimination has resulted in skepticism of a system that has frequently breached trust. While Sam Masters, an employee services manager in their study, is leery of White peers and believes they also do not trust him, Livers and Caver feel the challenge with trust is not individual integrity but anxiety about interaction between folks who are ill at ease simply because of differing racial backgrounds. Like many other interviewees, Tyrone Billington, general manager for a utility company, links trust with similarity of experience and perspective. ‘The only people I can trust are African Americans,’ he remarks, ‘and we’re in limited numbers. I can trust white colleagues only up to a point. I can’t afford to open myself up to somebody who doesn’t have my experience.’ Financial institution senior vice president Keith Shields, on the other hand, says ‘‘I trust everyone—up to 80 percent—regardless of their race’ (p. 22). While this suggests a willingness on the part of some Black managers to extend confidence to Whites and Blacks equally, such trust is seen as a significant privilege only selectively conferred (Livers & Caver, 2003).

Concerning the assertion that Blacks feel and know their Blackness, Livers and Caver (2003) state that many of the people they interviewed or surveyed referenced the burdens and pressures they felt as Blacks in corporate America. At every turn, whether it was
trust, responsibility, or feeling like they had to expend twice the effort, they explained the stress these factors added to their daily work lives. The message that many Blacks gather from the workplace and other social interactions, say Livers and Caver (2003), is that “race always matters and it always matters all the time” (p. 25). They argue also that it is difficult for some Blacks to establish anything other than superficial relationships with White coworkers since they feel they always have to put up their game face, rather than allow their true personality to shine. Regarding the contention that Blacks feel their working relationships with Whites are strained, Livers and Caver conclude the absence of full trust between Black and White colleagues impedes effective networking for Blacks.

Isaac and See (2001) discuss the loneliness and isolation that may be in store for Black managers who reach the crest of corporate hierarchy but lack sufficient emotional support. Racialized workplace tension is also evident via Isaac and See’s analysis of the “psychological strain, anxiety, trauma, and depression…experienced by new black executives who seek to blend into the corporate culture and acquire group identity and acceptance” (p. 92). One consequence of the commonly tenuous relationship Black professionals have with White coworkers, according to Isaac and See, per Hayes (1997), is that “for African Americans, there is often no wizard, Prince Charming, or fairy godmother to help ease the way” up the corporate ladder. Instead, “it can be a lonely, cold ascent” that is inevitably “stopped at the glass ceiling” (Isaac & See, 2001, p. 94).

The strained relationships with Whites and the apparent scourge of Blackness surface in Cose’s (1993) story of a young, Black, Harvard graduate, who was questioned by her vice president upon stating her plan to ditch a cushy job with the Fortune 500 firm and go into nonprofit work. The womyn revealed, among other things, that sxe was tired of
racial insensitivity, of people who noticed nothing about her but skin color, and sxe was sick of biting her tongue for fear that addressing the injustices sxe perceived would brand her a malcontent and jeopardize her career. ‘The bottom line,’ sxe complained, ‘is you’re black. And that is still a negative in this society’ (Cose, 1993, pp. 5-6).

In their study of top-level Black managers, Dickens and Dickens (1991) found that although the preponderance of respondents’ peers was White, these Blacks were not really part of the white club. The Dickens argue minor distinctions between Blacks and Whites inevitably reveal themselves in ways that remind each of who they both are, and they insist even strong companionships with Whites cannot completely change this.

Pre-data Collection Assumption #4:

*High-salaried or upper management Blacks have more extensive educational backgrounds than their White counterparts or the average.*

While often cited as the vehicle that delivers workers to the top of the corporate ladder, even well educated Blacks can find themselves facing hurdles that lesser educated Whites do not. This section, therefore, explores the contours of race, workplace achievement, and education in the literature.

Pierre (1998) notes that Blacks are substantially underrepresented in high status corporate posts—and they also advance much more slowly. He believes the notion that Blacks do not possess the necessary skills, qualifications, and experience has been growing. Pierre indicates, however, the view held by numerous researchers and many minorities is that race-related factors (and not education, qualification, and performance considerations) limit the advancement of Blacks and other minorities. Rather than objectively evaluating Blacks’ educational achievement, Pierre laments higher level
corporate promotions, regardless of academic credentials and assessment of professional and performance standards, remain a bastion of entitlement for White males especially.

Pierre (1998) provides evidence that Black executives possess educational credentials broadly equivalent to those of America’s leading corporate CEOs. While a 1987 assessment of Black managers by Richard Clarke Associates, Inc. found that 97% had college degrees and over 50% had earned graduate degrees, for example, a 1986 Fortune Magazine review of leading CEOs, who were all White, found that 97% had college degrees and 63% had completed graduate programs. Though the education argument is presented as rationalization for insufficient Black upward mobility, Pierre notes sources like the 1992 “Pipelines of Progress” by the U.S. Department of Labor maintain attitudinal and organizational obstacles have a much more harmful effect on minority vocational progression than credentials or career choice.

Moreover, Pierre (1998) highlights the contention that Black managers generally are more educated than their counterparts. While Hare (2002) states Blacks typically take longer than Whites to finish college and points out that employment and earnings proportions increase with educational attainment for both Blacks and Whites, he stresses that gains are smaller for Blacks than for Whites at the same level. This sustains the notion that Black executives are more educated than their jobs or salaries may suggest.

The persistence of racialized earnings inequality, despite controlling for educational level, has been widely reported. Teele (2002) points out, for example, that the Black male to White male earnings ratio among four-year college-educated administrators and executives in 1979 was 62¢ per dollar. And, U.S. Census data Table 1 shows significant
disparities between Black and White males, Black and White femyles, and Blacks and Whites combined, across almost all educational attainment categories, remain today.

Regarding education, Boushey and Cherry (2000) conclude most writing on the topic implicitly assumes that glass-ceiling effects are more widespread among the higher-educated. Since the research participants in my study are likely to be very well educated, they may be more severely impacted by salary inequity than less educated Blacks. Thompson and DiTomaso (1988) report the Black managers they studied consider themselves just as well qualified as White colleagues since they attended the same schools, earned the same degrees, and have undergone the same work experiences.

Much of this research contradicts conservative theories of discrimination, which hold that Black-White earnings inequalities are attributable to racial disparities in humyn capital—“investments in education, training, and other activities that raise the productive capacity of people”—rather than racial prejudice in the job market (Whitehead, 2005, p. 84). The implication is that individual Blacks and the group as a whole can narrow the income gap simply by making more serious investments in humyn capital. This assertion, relentlessly peddled by Thomas Sowell à la Ethnic America: A History (1981), Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality? (1984), The Quest for Cosmic Justice (1999), A Personal Odyssey (2000), and Black Rednecks and White Liberals (2005), and less viciously promulgated by John McWhorter in Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America (2000), Winning the Race: Beyond the Crisis in Black America (2005), and virally (McWhorter, 2007; McWhorter, 2008), may be supported if it is revealed that the HSBHTPs in this study have excelled in education, training, and other humyn capital markers and their salaries and organizational statuses are on par with their White
counterparts. While their very presence in the upper echelons of corporate governance could lend credence to the conservative theory of discrimination relative to employment, participants’ perceptions of fairness and equity in remuneration would help establish whether compensation discrimination is a concern.

Whitehead (2005) suggests the conservative humyn capital case is not corroborated by statistical evidence. He argues, like Hare (2002), Teele (2002), and Pierre (1998), that Blacks earn less than Whites even when both groups possess the same level of educational attainment. This assertion is supported by Table 1, which shows that at the high school grad, bachelor’s, master’s, professional, and doctorate educational achievement levels, there is a $6,113; $5,945; $8,476; $23,373; and $11,940 gap between White and Black wages for 25 to 64 year olds who work full-time, year round. As Whitehead (2005) notes, such statistical inequities indicate the humyn capital line of reasoning can at best explicate only part of the Black-White earnings disparity.

Whitehead (2005) states that Keynesian economic liberals believe education alone will not guarantee better employment scenarios for Blacks and other minorities. A more common assertion for such theorists is that well-educated and skilled Blacks are excluded from lucrative employment opportunities because of statistical discrimination. So if managers generally feel White employees are more productive than Blacks, they may conclude it is statistically safer to employ all Whites—even if a substantial number of Blacks can outdo as many Whites. This kind of prejudice or stereotyping usually occurs when an employer gauges an applicant’s credentials according to the typical qualities of a racial group rather than unique qualifications. This is especially the case, Whitehead
explains, when the price of acquiring individualized productivity data is high since companies tend to feel the cost of identifying well qualified Blacks is not reasonable.

\textit{Pre-data Collection Assumption #5:}

\textit{High-salaried or upper management Blacks have more extensive employment backgrounds than their White counterparts or the average.}

Just as the previous discussion involved educational capital and its intersection with race and workplace parity, it is useful to consider the ways in which work experience and job tenure play a role. Pierre (1998) discusses evidence that Blacks lack the requisite experiences to succeed in the upper levels of corporate America. A 1989 U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission analysis, for example, revealed that only 4.5\% of Blacks in private industry worked in executive, administrative, or managerial posts versus 13.3\% of White employees and 11.4\% of the total workforce. Pierre, however, is careful to cite research indicating that minorities continue to be guided into customary academic and occupational pathways that do not lead to the skills and experiences deemed essential for ascension to the executive ranks. This apparent deficiency is due in part to minorities’ inadequate access to pertinent developmental opportunities and experiences necessary for progression. Instead of being nurtured and receiving executive-level preparation, Pierre found that Black managers increasingly felt disappointed, frustrated, betrayed, and angry that even though they had the academic qualifications and professional experience required, they were not experiencing rates of advancement comparable to their White peers. Pierre and others fail to address the reality that Black managers left behind may then be more qualified than their counterparts.
Using U.S. Census data, Jacobsen and Levin (2000) compare the wage-tenure and wage-experience records of college-educated and non college-educated females and minorities with the same records for White males (Cherry & Rodgers, 2000). As Cherry and Rodgers note, the various profiles viewed by gender and race suggest that exclusionary practices and general bias exist. Indeed, Jacobsen and Levin find the comparative earnings deficit that minority college graduates face can be linked to inferior fiscal returns to tenure and experience, and this deficiency builds over time (Cherry & Rodgers, 2000). Jacobsen and Levin (2000) found that White men, college-graduates and otherwise, have the greatest returns to experience of all groups, resulting in higher combined returns for White males relative to any other group.

Cose (1993) argues that for top Black executives success was not only more difficult but almost always later and at lower levels than for similarly qualified Whites. This almost certainly means these black superachievers ended up beginning their current positions with more work experience or job tenure than their White peers.

*Pre-data Collection Assumption #6:*

*Blacks generally (as well as those who are high-salaried or in upper management) feel they have not been treated completely equitably and fairly over the course of their employment.*

Examples of Black employee and managerial perception of unequal and substandard treatment abound in the literature. Pierre (1998), for instance, concludes that race is an impediment that considerably obstructs the upward mobility of Blacks and other minorities. He maintains that issues beyond academic qualifications, professional expertise, and work performance limit these workers’ advancement. This widely accepted
perspective suggests that race is not a barrier for White employees and their vocational achievement is not stymied in this area. Pierre’s interrogation of senior Black corporate executives reveals that it is they who are disadvantaged by the differential socioeconomic and cultural pedigrees as well as the discriminatory effects of ubiquitously negative stereotypes. He reports that of three matched research groups—White managers, Black managers who participated in specialized training, and Black managers who did not participate in such training—both groups of Blacks experienced substantially slower rates of progression than their comparably credentialed White peers. Pierre highlights a 1986 survey, which found that 84% of 107 Black manager respondents (who possessed MBAs from the country’s top five graduate business programs) felt race hindered their advancement despite clear qualifications. This research plainly shows that Black managers believe they are treated unfairly. Pierre also points to a 1987 study, which concluded that although Blacks believed they were qualified to hold top jobs within their respective companies, 56% felt they could not attain these stations due to race. Moreover, 62% of these respondents said their mobility in general was obstructed by race.

Pierre views the traditional practice of directing minorities toward areas where they are unlikely to receive appropriate preparation and the best opportunities for executive participation as unfair and viciously compounding. The lack of relevant exposure and expertise this virtually guarantees undoubtedly disadvantages Blacks. While Pierre stops short of conclusively declaring the corporate promotion process unfair, he insists the predominant data and research intimate an inequitable situation for qualified Blacks. Pierre also cites an article from The Wall Street Journal that reported insufficient opportunity and an inability to advance on a par with similarly qualified Whites as the
number one concern for Blacks who had departed predominantly White companies. He states, furthermore, that many researchers in this area feel a migration of talented Blacks from corporate America is caused mainly by what Blacks see as sluggish upward mobility rates due to disparate treatment and uneven access to opportunity based on race.

Cobbs and Turnock (2003) describe the unfair treatment of Blacks in corporate America in stark, dichotomous, and exhausting terms. It consists of being questioned about their abilities when others are not and being left out of meetings, activities, and memo distributions important to their work, for example. White males, according to Cobbs and Turnock, often benefit from an environment of affirmative assumptions about their capabilities, unless or until they do a bad job. Black managers, conversely, must demonstrate their ability in a never-ending test of guilty until proven innocent. Cobbs and Turnock declare the process exhausting and warn that it is the emotional as opposed to the physical strain of working twice as hard that wears down Blacks’ capacity to function if they are not attentive.

Livers and Caver (2003) note the tales of daily workplace indignities and bald-faced racism are remarkably similar irrespective of the education, organization, employment level, or geographical location of the storyteller. Although this study’s focus will likely be skewed in areas like job level and education because of the $100,000 salary minimum, it will be interesting to see whether educational attainment, industrial field, occupational level, and/or geographic region markedly influence participants’ realities and perceptions. Livers and Caver find that unfair treatment regularly manifests as workplace shenanigans, misstatements, job assignments, and office relationships even though most jobs do not tolerate obvious discrimination. Many of these businesses publicly embrace diversity and
profess to be open and welcoming. But by maintaining an assumption that the workplace is equitable for everyone such corporations propagate a fallacy that many receive as fact. This presumed truth, Livers and Caver argue, is misleading because it only considers a single perspective. Rather than equalizing opportunity, this *assumption of similarity* where differences indeed exist actually marginalizes Blacks and other underrepresented managers. This attitude, Livers and Caver submit, disadvantages Blacks by ignoring the reality that they face unique and additional challenges. They assert, for example, that the assumption of similarity enables people to doubt the sincerity of complaints that treatment is not equal. By presuming the playing field is level, Livers and Caver maintain, non-Black coworkers are able to reject allegations of subtle discrimination.

Livers and Caver (2003) address the common sentiment among Blacks that they are treated unfairly at the office. They reference multiple studies and numerous interviews in their inference that many Black executives feel they must expend twice the effort of their colleagues to attain the same recognition. Respondent Sam Masters, for example, says, ‘[I feel] like I constantly have to prove myself.’ As opposed to merely performing well, interviewee James Washington feels he has to produce record revenues to be considered successful. He remarks, ‘I have to have strategies that…have a hell of a lot more impact and so forth…I just have to do that.’ While Nan Blunt has felt compelled to demonstrably substantiate her value since her high school integrated, her grown-up experiences have merely intensified this belief and led her to constantly over prepare for professional assignments. ‘I’m clear it’s a race thing,’ she states. ‘I’m going to prove I’m competent’ (Livers & Caver, 2003, p. 23). Blunt declares that racial considerations have not halted her progression and actually credits her pattern of working twice as hard with much of
her professional success. The real question, however, is whether she received equal returns to tenure and experience. That is, did working twice as hard render her merely equal to peers or appropriately render her higher positioned and better compensated.

Livers and Caver (2003) interviewed or surveyed many individuals who expressed the heaviness and tension they felt as Blacks in corporate America. Whether it was trust, responsibility, or a sense that they had to work doubly hard, they described the stress these issues added to their jobs with feedback like: ‘You constantly have to be conscious about things that other people don’t have to worry about.’ and ‘It’s just so much pressure.’ (p. 24). Livers and Caver point out the Black leaders they spoke with were not simply presented with a little more stress; rather they were continually besieged with anxiety. Because many of these managers feel they are being treated and perceived differently from their colleagues, the authors note, their principal desire is for their organizations to see them as human beings—true partners in companies in which they also have a real stake. Their ideal is for the corporate assumption of similarity to transform into genuine acceptance and a sincere valuation of all diversity.

Livers and Caver (2003) identify *racial obligation* as an additional load corporate Blacks must shoulder. Most of the managers they surveyed felt that their White colleagues linked their work performance with that of other Blacks. Almost 90% believed if they performed successfully other Blacks would be viewed more positively, and about 50% said their non-Black associates generalize the errors of one Black person to all. Many Blacks, according to Livers and Caver, are burdened by the belief that if they fall short or if intense scrutiny by Whites renders their efforts deficient, others will be
negatively affected. Also, these managers feel their achievement will influence whether other Blacks are provided with fair opportunities or unreasonably scrutinized by Whites.

Livers and Caver (2003) also submit that “gender, race, and the combination thereof” can shape the distribution of workplace responsibilities and opportunities (p. 76). These inequities manifest themselves most commonly, they explain, in salaries and promotions; access to key people and projects; and explicit and implicit position duties. Unfortunately, and unfairly, the authors add, stereotypes influence these outcomes.

Networking is another major area of concern for Livers and Caver (2003). In addition to establishing that the absence of real trust between Black and White colleagues makes effective networking for Blacks difficult, they found that many Blacks believe that Whites do not always see them as bona fide corporate partners or extend them true access to information and opportunities. Many Blacks feel this kind of behavior is the cause of Black-White networking difficulty.

Mentoring and mentorship can also be a problem. Livers and Caver (2003) explain that because mentors are generally inclined to assist individuals who look like themselves and with whom they can readily connect, the question for Blacks changes from, “Can I get a mentor who looks like me?” to “Can I get a mentor at all?” (pp. 117-118). The likelihood in most situations is that mentors will be White although having a mentor from a different racial background is a potential challenge that Whites typically do not face.

Corporate political savvy or office politics is another area of special concern for Blacks. Livers and Caver (2003) relay the story of Jeremy Dodson hiring an African-American womyn and promoting a Black man and hearing “talk in the halls…that [he] was starting his own little ‘ghetto fiefdom,’” with one White colleague literally coming
up to him, slapping him on the back, and laughingly saying, ‘So white people aren’t good enough for you? It’s starting to look like a ghetto down there!’ (p. 137). Livers and Caver explain that for Blacks and other minorities hiring decisions become political, not because of competency or attitudinal concerns on the part of candidates, but because of race. They argue that for Blacks politics and race are linked all through the corporate experience, and the politics Blacks encounter are potentially more dangerous than those faced by White coworkers in general and White males in particular.

Unfortunately, as Livers and Caver (2003) state, many Black executives find that even after effectively finishing projects or developing their external reputations, they must first be validated by superiors and peers in order for the internal team to recognize their professional expertise and business insight. On the other hand, many Blacks believe this seal of approval is automatically conferred on their White colleagues as “it seems a privilege they can lose rather than one they must earn” (p. 149).

Isaac and See (2001) believe more Blacks are entering corporate America and becoming susceptible objects of sinister, destructive, and unremitting types of offensive behavior exhibited at all levels. They specifically investigate how corporate violence damages these leaders emotionally and organizationally, and arrests radiant careers that could thrive in less traumatic environs. Isaac and See state that concern is growing regarding the disturbing amount of “firings, resignations, injuries, homicides, accidental deaths, and other forms of personal and structural violence” that impact Blacks in these settings (p. 86). Even more disquieting, Isaac and See add, violence against Black business leaders materializes as blatant racism, oppression, depersonalization, isolation, and even death. These authors uphold the idea that Blacks are not treated equitably or
fairly by mentioning that an increasing number of extraordinarily gifted young Black professionals are deeply disillusioned and discretely discuss the problem—the significant discontent, feelings, and anxieties they have with their counterparts.

Isaac and See (2001) posit, moreover, that these executives’ failure to uncover corporate America’s *dirty little doings* is not sustained by sanguinity but rooted in fear of endangering, derailing, and destroying their own livelihoods. So, these Black leaders endure interpersonal violence in the form of intimidation, compulsory contradictory decision-making, name-calling, harassment, racial insults in electronic communications, ignominy, and abandonment in bigoted corporate offices. Isaac and See also note such violence may involve circulating malevolent rumors about coworkers or belittling them to others. The literature, they add, shows that during their novice phase of employment, new Black execs are occasionally regarded as stupid, incompetent, and lazy. And unlike their White counterparts in many instances, Blacks find themselves isolated and alone.

Echoing the findings of other researchers, Cose (1993) remarks that he repeatedly encountered individuals who appeared to have every accouterment of success but unfailingly expressed some version of the following:

I have done everything I was supposed to do. I have stayed out of trouble with the law, gone to the right schools, and worked myself to death. What more do they want? Why in God’s name won’t they accept me as a full humyn being? Why am I pigeonholed in a ‘black job’? Why am I still not allowed to aspire to the same things every white person in America takes as a birthright? Why, when I most want to be seen, am I suddenly rendered invisible? (p. 1).
In conversation with a highly accomplished Black executive, husband, father, and Harvard MBA grad, for example, Cose (1993) found the man was not happy with the way his career was transpiring. Though he was very well-off by any regular standard, he found it irksome that so many of his White classmates had flourished with apparent ease. Many were corporate royalty, with seven-figure remuneration packages, private planes at their disposal, and other appurtenances of power and status for which he could only wish. In spite of the good life he enjoyed, he felt he had expended extraordinary effort but had been denied extraordinary success. Cose persistently encountered the conviction that for Blacks success came harder, later, and at lower levels than for similarly qualified Whites.

Cose (1993) notes that virtually every researcher he knows who has questioned large numbers of Black professionals about how they are doing has reported an abundance of dissatisfaction. These professionals frequently complained about being excluded from informal communications and not being in on things. Hardly any, however, mentioned having mentors or anybody high within their companies who took an encouraging interest in their development. On the whole, says Cose, they considered themselves less likely to be advanced than their White colleagues and felt they had to exert extraordinary amounts of energy to make Whites comfortable with them. They acknowledged being under a great deal of pressure and many (especially among the Black males being studied) seemed to be leaving corporations. This, according to Cose, has led some researchers to declare that Black men who possess the same high sense of self and aggressive qualities as White men are obliged either to walk softly or deal with the possibility of being frustrated and driven out of industry. Cose points out that even among those who were not relegated to race work, there is a great deal of discontent. Although the Blacks
involved were very ambitious and committed to attaining the highest success, many simply concluded that they were not held in the same regard as their White colleagues.

On the subject of differential or unfair treatment of Blacks vis-à-vis Whites, Dickens and Dickens (1991) state that Black professionals felt they had to employ a greater level of job dexterity, especially in management, than their White counterparts. These Blacks believed that in order to subsist and actually prosper in a predominantly White organization, there were some skills they had to master that were different from those learned by Whites. Dickens and Dickens argue that top-level Black managers fully appreciate that because they are among the few in such prestigious positions, everyone is watching them. Rather than wasting time worrying about whether the system is fair, therefore, their focus is on determining how they can most effectively function within it.

While this is a wise strategy to some degree, when Herculean efforts yield average results and the powers that be do not understand how, a reconsideration of interpersonal workplace reality is in order. Because so many Whites, in particular, truly feel the corporate playing field is level, it is critical to honestly examine inequity no matter how obvious or subtle. The goal is to mitigate the barriers and challenges that only some employees face and render systems equal for the good of all.

In 1988, Thompson and DiTomaso state that since such a small number of racial and ethnic minorities have penetrated middle management and entered the ambit of senior executive leadership, many have become frustrated and disgusted with corporate America. They report that Black and Hispanic professionals especially felt their backgrounds caused them to be treated differently and left them wondering whether they could ever reach the executive suite. Black managers’ basic concern, say Thompson and
DiTimaso, is that their failure to ascend to the upper echelons of predominantly White corporations is attributable to some form of discrimination. They maintain that they are clearly as qualified as their White colleagues since they have equivalent employment experience and have received the same degrees from the same schools.

Nia Long provides another example of pervasive feelings of unequal and unfair treatment among accomplished Blacks as she laments,

> If I were a white womyn with the amount of blockbuster success films I’ve starred in, I’d probably be making at least $4 million more per film. And I don’t get paid $1 million a movie, so let’s be real about that too (Gates, 2004, p. 224).

**Pre-data Collection Assumption #7:**

*High-salaried or upper management Blacks feel accomplished, confident, and secure and are highly driven, though they believe racism is alive and well in the workplace.*

While there is no doubt that Blacks and other minorities are achieving corporate success in greater numbers than in the past, Thomas and Gabarro (1999) point out that minority executives overwhelmingly are found in high-level staff posts outside core business areas, mainly in departments like community and government relations, humyn resources, and legal. While such positions are clearly important, they rarely lead to CEO status, provide opportunities for other senior operational jobs, or involve real influence in setting strategic direction or managing overall profit and loss. Thomas and Gabarro specifically examine *plateaued minority middle managers* (using White executives as the comparison group) because they see them as professionals who have attained a substantial degree of managerial responsibility, but are viewed internally as unlikely to advance to executive leadership. Persons who fit this description were typically upper-
middle managers, who headed functional departments within business units. And, common designations were branch manager, director of marketing, and plant manager.

Benjamin’s (1991) analysis of the Black professional interrogates the, then, pervasive belief that the Black elite, because of their remarkable achievements, transcended the obstructions of racism. Sxe passionately contends that both individualized and institutionalized discrimination pervades the lives of all Blacks, irrespective of social status. What distinguishes her research is a focused examination of how the subjective aspects of racism impact objective accomplishment. A critical message from the life histories of successful Blacks that Benjamin presents is that although they had attained all of the material and intangible accouterments of objective success, their exultation was precarious. The subjective components of racism continually reminded them of the tenuousness of objective achievement. Regardless of their ranks, perquisites, and accomplishments, they were still Black in a prejudiced social system. Benjamin believes individual and institutional racism are fundamentally connected. Sxe submits that any reclassification of racism, whether at the individual or collective level, must consider that it is systematic and has subjective and objective elements. The subjective aspect, explains Benjamin, encompasses the various psychological consequences of racism—affective, behavioral, and cognitive—on individual people. The objective aspect comprises the structural impacts of racism and its disparate life chances on the entire group.

Supporting the notion that high-salaried, upper-level Blacks are highly driven, Benjamin (1991) remarks that corporate Blacks are devoting more and more time to career development. Sxe points out that climbing the corporate ladder requires social interaction outside the office, where many business dealings occur. Benjamin believes
Blacks must increase face time with Whites beyond the workday if they expect to be successful on the job. Sxe notes that some Blacks’ business and social contacts trend progressively White, as they feel they must completely adopt White lifestyles and values to advance. Benjamin insists, however, that racism is alive and well, given that an all-White setting for Blacks, whether by design or circumstance, can be strenuous, especially since there is no relief from the incessant impertinence of racism. For the record, 62% of Benjamin’s Talented One Hundred revealed that their friends or social acquaintances were Black. They reported a higher degree of trust and more comfortability with other Blacks. As one individual expressed, ‘You always have to watch what you say and what you do in the presence of Whites, whether it is in a social or business environment. You can’t be free. There is a sense of being watched’ (p. 146).

Also concerning the belief that workplace racism is still very real, Pierre (1998) discusses a 1986 survey, where 98% of MBA-degreed respondents felt there was no equality for them in corporate America. Indeed 84% of these Black professionals asserted that their advancement was hindered because of race. Fifty-six percent of Black managers in a 1987 survey, who deemed themselves fit for senior positions within their companies, Pierre continues, felt that race prevented them from reaching the top. Indeed, 62% of these managers perceived that their overall mobility was hampered by race.

Daniels (2004) posits that the fierce determination of post-civil rights Black managers is due largely to their belief that the sacrifices required by an allegedly color-blind corporate system are pointless. To some extent, he explains, this is because their desire is to advance further in less time. Assimilation and downplaying the function of race are not tenable choices for this cohort, says Daniels. In fact, he maintains, young Black
professionals do not want their Blackness to be disregarded, since they have determined the reality of race cannot and should not be divested from the workplace. Daniels claims that this group is actually driven by race. While this generation takes issue with bigotry and substandard or unequal treatment, they wish to be acknowledged for who and what they are and treated equitably at the same time.

Cobbs and Turnock’s (2003) analysis of the experiences of 32 very successful Black senior corporate executives reveals they had to find ways to shine in extremely subjective surroundings, which they conquered with resolve, acumen, and most of all inimitable self-confidence. For them, submit Cobbs and Turnock, there was no question that corporate racism persisted; it was clear in Whites’ discomfort and hostility, as evidenced in their averted eyes, general indifference, and too-jovial laughter.

From more than 1,000 Black professional stories, Livers and Caver (2003) uncover a plethora of subtle indignities and overtly racist behavior. Regarding the notion of being accomplished and highly driven despite the existence of racism, Livers and Caver discuss people like Nan Blunt, who has always felt the need to indubitably substantiate her worth. Tying this extra effort to race and acknowledging it as exhausting and nerve-racking, Blunt refuses to leave room for others to question her capability insisting, ‘I always will work harder’ (p. 23). One could argue that successful Blacks must be highly driven since society’s unremitting message, per Livers and Caver, is that race matters constantly.

Again, participants of the current study are expected to be highly accomplished, confident, secure, and intensely driven in the face of perceived racism, rather than hanging on by a thread, performing at or below par, or struggling to keep up with peers.
Isaac and See (2001) also confirm the existence of racial discrimination in the modern workplace. Though Black executives are steadily gaining administrative visibility, they point out, these individuals continue to experience insidious, widespread, castigatory, and vicious pressures intended to stall growth as they steer their forward development.

According to the young Black female executive who fled the corporate world for the nonprofit sector in Cose’s (1993) study, Blackness continues to be viewed negatively in American society. Another interesting assertion from Cose is that this sense of dissatisfaction is greatest in Black households with incomes of $50,000 or more. This data, he notes, powerfully confirms that middle class Blacks remain burdened by discrimination. The problem, as UCLA sociologist Lawrence Bobo indicates, is that ‘These are people of high accomplishment and who have worked hard for what they have achieved. As far as they are concerned, however, what happened to Rodney King,’ for example, ‘can just as easily befall any of them. Given all the dues they have paid, and all the contributions the black middle class has made, these events—especially the jury verdict—came as a jolt of racial injustice’ (Cose, 1993, pp. 7-8).

Some of this, however, may be a function of time. What lessons about emerging equality might be gained from an examination of the O.J. Simpson verdict many years after the Rodney King trial, for example? Might the current argument be that high income Blacks are finally coming into their own? Cose (1993) also notes that while 52% of Black executives at Fortune 500 companies in 1991 agreed that their working environments were comfortable and supportive for Blacks, even persons in this comparatively content group were not particularly optimistic. When asked to indicate the major restraining
force on their professional development, most identified racism, although the majority agreed the discrimination they face is covert, subtle, and heavily masked.

Dickens and Dickens (1991) address the accomplishment and confidence of Black executives by asserting that successful Blacks in top corporate posts typically are easily distinguished by their mastery of personal style and charisma. Often, they have perfected a carriage that exudes authority and is exhibited in their dress, their body language, and their charming interpersonal manner. There is an attitude of supreme self-confidence and business professionalism—even in the midst of great anxiety, note Dickens and Dickens. These leaders convey high expectations not only for themselves but also for the people around them. This kind of commentary supports the underlying expectation that high-salaried Blacks are objectively superachievers. In order to reach the executive suite and the upper echelons of management, the presumption is that Blacks must be unquestionably extraordinary—in matters of education, experience, tenure, presentation, dress, and oral and written communication.

Assumptions Revisited

I began this literature review with a series of assumptions about what would be unearthed. Ultimately, a thorough appraisal revealed many ways in which my initial assumptions held true. The arguably ubiquitous assumption that men earn more than womyn, and Black men earn more than Black womyn, for example, was strongly supported. From the gross wage gap between males of all races and femyles of all races across every level of educational attainment in the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2006 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the 2006 Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund’s
finding that femyle faculty at 45 public HBCUs earn less than their male counterparts across all academic ranks, the existence of gender inequality is clear.

Toutkoushian and Conley (2005), however, challenge this assumption with their conclusion that while gender-based inequity in the academy persists, the overall unexplained wage gap has substantially diminished and there is no longer a statistically significant difference in men and womyn’s pay at doctoral-level or liberal arts schools. As well, a close reading of the aforementioned Census data reveals that while White men consistently outpace White womyn, and Black men consistently out earn Black womyn, White womyn who possess doctorates are paid more than Black men with the same credential—not to mention that fewer than 75,000 Black males nationwide even hold the degree. It is technically inaccurate, therefore, to say that men earn more than womyn. In light of the current study, moreover, a legitimate concern is whether and why Black males with doctorates believe they earn more or less than White femyles.

Contrary to the assumption that Whites earn more than Blacks, Census Bureau data also reveal that (1) Black males and femyles with less than a 9th grade education earn more than White males and femyles, (2) Black males who hold professional degrees earn more than White male counterparts, and (3) Black femyles at the bachelor’s degree level earn nearly $9,000 annually more than White femyles.

Furthermore, in contrast to the assumption that executive-level Blacks have more extensive educational backgrounds than Whites, Census data illustrate that while Black womyn (83.08%) are more likely than White womyn (80.20%) and White men (75.74%) to hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, Black men (72.69%) are less likely. And, though Pierre (1998) concludes that Black executives’ education is equivalent to Whites’, he
presents 1987 and 1986 studies, which show that both Blacks and Whites hold bachelor’s degrees at 97%, but just 50% of Blacks have advanced degrees versus 63% of Whites.

In the end, it is my hope that this assumptive approach might help others tackle the often daunting task of literature review. In this case, the developed literature review method helped provide a framework for conceptualizing and processing an unwieldy literature and applying it to the research question at hand.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides details regarding methodology including participant sampling, the research instrument and processes, and data analysis. A phenomenological and hermeneutic research approach was employed in this grounded theoretical data collection and analysis. Per Bogdan and Biklen (2003), emphasis was placed on the subjective aspects of informants’ behavior since a significant goal of this project was to understand how and what meaning informants make of their daily lives and historical experiences. Phenomenology makes sense as multiple ways of interpreting experiences exist, and the meaning people make in interaction with their humyn and material environments constitutes reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). And since hermeneutics aims to discover and interpret the context of what is being studied and phenomenology focuses on capturing and understanding the essence and anatomy of phenomena, a combination approach was especially effective in uncovering hidden meanings which otherwise might not have been perceived (Mott, n.d.). As well, a grounded theory frame was apposite given its deeply inductive processes and my desire to make sense of a largely unexamined subject by systematically generating theory from emergent conceptual data categories (Rhine, 2009).

As Sayre (2001) explains, grounded theory is an extension of phenomenology, and both methodologies commonly use in-depth interviews to gather dialogue texts that are examined for clusters and themes of meaning. Since sxe states that phenomenology starts with a research question while grounded theory is performed to uncover a question for subsequent testing, the fact that I began with a phenomenological question designed to
generate an explanatory theory regarding some inductively determined aspect explains why I chose to combine the approaches. Because phenomenology’s origins are philosophical and grounded theory is more sociological (Johnson & Christensen, 2004), moreover, my pedigree probably accounts for my gravitation toward the latter. But since my aim is both to describe the experience of being a SBHTP and to generate a theory related to this status, a blended approach is ideal.

And since the term hermeneutic initially referred to interpreting biblical texts and scriptures and has been used more recently to elucidate the world as if it were a text (Ehrich, 2003), this study’s largely telephone-generated data makes hermeneutic interpretation a particularly fit companion for this mixed methodology. While hermeneutics is generally suitable for analyzing narrative text from phenomenological or grounded theory interviews, Ehrich also deems it appropriate because of culture’s powerful role in shaping behavior. She adds that hermeneutics contends that the understanding of personal life experiences mirrors broad cultural perspectives as expressed via language or maintained as self-interpretations. Since participant narratives are central to this work and hermeneutics assumes there is a shared frame of reference between the researcher and the texts being analyzed, finally, my particularized experience and interests enhance insight into participant patterns of communication (Sayre, 2001).

Sampling

Twenty SBHTPs who earn at least $100,000 annually were selected for this study. While Johnson and Christensen (2004) list 20-30 interviews as typical for grounded theory and there were preliminary concerns that 20 or more might be both difficult to obtain and unnecessary, this number balanced dissertation committee member directives
with Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) advice to seek data saturation within the confines of access, resources, research objectives, and personal time and energy. Since the goal was to interview an even mix of males and females in this relatively rare population so issues of race and gender were appropriately incorporated into the analysis and resultant theory, purposive/theoretical, convenience, and snowball sampling were utilized. Participants, therefore, were chosen because they are Black, they helped achieve a male-female balance, they maximized opportunities for comparing emerging concepts, they were relatively easily accessible, and/or they were referred by someone who knows them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Zikmund, 2003). Qualified interviewees were individuals who work for any hospitality and tourism organization (including hotel and lodging, food and beverage, travel and tourism, and recreation and leisure enterprises). Participation from persons throughout the U.S. was desired to enhance generalizability.

Employing nonprobability, convenience, and snowball sampling presents potential problems with research reliability, validity, and generalizability. The introduction of nonprobability and convenience sampling means that projecting data beyond my research group might be inappropriate (Zikmund, 2003). Though this study’s findings may be interesting, important, and useful, they must be conscientiously reported and appropriately weighed in analyses of the larger population and other research samples. The results cannot necessarily be taken as completely representative of the referenced population. Also, with snowball sampling bias is likely to become an issue since an individual recommended by someone also in the sample has a greater likelihood of being similar to the first person (Zikmund, 2003). Furthermore, the ultimate sample selected may negatively impact reliability in that future research studies utilizing different
sampling techniques may generate seemingly conflicting conclusions. While nonprobability, convenience, and snowball sampling are less than ideal, they are practically appropriate given the exploratory nature of this work.

The sampling process occurred, in part, by forwarding a formal letter to Black and minority hospitality and tourism professional associations and publications about this research project and its basic parameters and requesting assistance in identifying qualified individuals. Targeted organizations included the Black Culinarian Alliance (BCA); Black Meetings and Tourism Magazine; the Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA); the National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators & Developers (NABHOOD); and the National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners (NCBMP). As well, e-mail invitations and follow-up phone calls requested participation and/or referrals from prominent Black hospitality leaders. And since I also enlisted the support of my dissertation advisor and other acquaintances in addition to contacting a few professionals with whom I am personally familiar, word of mouth played a vital role in generating qualified respondents. The hope was that employing an array of recruitment tactics would generate a mix of participants from a broad range of job categories. While an important sampling consideration was developing a reliable method of verifying that potential respondents indeed met study parameters, the reality is that respondents’ words were taken largely at face value in the same way that many survey-based studies inquire about income, race, or experience.

Instrument

Loosely structured, open-ended and in-depth personal interviews were the singular data collection tool. The planned interview length was 90 minutes, as 60-90 minutes is
typical for in-depth interviews (Merriam, 1998). While the initial goal was to conduct interviews in private, convenient, non-office locations to help ensure confidentiality and encourage candidness, the two in-person interviews were conducted in the participants’ offices and the remaining 18 were conducted via phone. Final arrangements were based on interviewee convenience and accessibility as well as the unavailability of travel funding. The point of the relatively unstructured and unrestricted interview style was to provide an opportunity for HSBHTPs to share information from their perspectives, rather than respond to pre-planned questions about things I feel matter most. Hopefully this type of guided conversation, along with the incorporation of Seidman’s (1998) exploring (vs. probing) resulted in a thorough examination of the topics and issues that are most relevant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Although there were no firmly set questions or specific order in which interviews proceeded, there was an attempt to consistently address such broad issues as gender, race, intercultural relations, educational and employment history, equity and fairness perceptions, and participant feelings. Figure 2 provides a list of the kinds of questions that were commonly used in cases where the desired broad areas did not surface organically. While there was a conscious effort to learn from and build on earlier interviews, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommend, the overall strategy was simply to pose initial and follow up questions that helped illuminate respondents’ experiences. Per Bogdan and Biklen (2003), Creswell (1998), and Seidman (1998), appropriate interview times were scheduled, open-ended questions were asked, deep listening was employed, respondents’ feedback was followed up, and hunches were pursued.
Interviews alone were used, in part, because of the time and difficulty involved in conducting observations in a corporate context. Observation would likely involve gaining permission not only from interviewees but also from upper management and even co-workers. In-depth interviews are much less complex, and they can be conducted at mutually convenient times and locations. Furthermore, observation may not uncover the impact of past experiences or accurately capture respondents’ perceptions.

To enhance the accurate collection of data, sessions were audiotaped as Creswell (1998) suggests. Interviewee permission was obtained in each case, and a periodic check was made to ensure the tape was continually recording.

Process

I conducted all in-person and telephone interviews and performed all other data collection procedures. Challenges included personal time and ability constraints and logistically coordinating sufficient blocks of uninterrupted time. Since all conversations were tape recorded, professional services were employed to transcribe the data where
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What exactly do you do in your job position?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tell me about how you got to your current position, both in terms of employment history and any educational background.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What impact do you think your race has had on your degree of career success, if any?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact do you think your gender has had on your degree of career success, if any?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is your annual salary in your current position?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you believe you are being fairly/equitably compensated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel you have been fairly treated in the past?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would you say that you have been fast-tracked, or have you always gone the long, hard way?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What would you say about Black executives and workplace attire?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In terms of complexion, pigmentism, colorism, or the whole light skinned-dark skinned issue, if you had to appropriately place yourself in one group or the other, would it be the lighter group or the darker group?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you say about race work, or the notion that Blacks who reach the upper levels of hospitality or corporate America tend to be found mostly in certain positions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that racism still exists?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What needs to be done to improve the status of Blacks in the hospitality and tourism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else you’d like to add that you feel was not addressed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Basic guiding questions that were posed and supplemented by follow ups.*
possible. Once outside assistance was utilized, the goal was to limit project transcription to a single individual for the sake of internal consistency and to minimize the possibility of a confidentiality breach. In reality, data was transcribed by various employees at a single agency, though I dealt primarily with a single contact. To ensure confidentiality, a formal agreement was signed prior to the release of any interviews. And I spot-transcribed data from all interviews processed elsewhere to verify accuracy.

**Intervener Bias**

Another important concern that was acknowledged and mitigated is the potential for interviewer bias. Because I am a Black male, who possesses more than ten years of hospitality and tourism experience and am currently pursuing a doctoral degree in hospitality administration, it was critically important not to get too close to the research. Special care was taken not to lead interviewees to respond in particular ways.

Although I frequently communicated that I would try to avoid making assumptions for the integrity of the research process, I was veritably chided in some instances for posing obvious questions about the existence of racism, White privilege, and double standards. In response to a question about White privilege, for example, Ronny retorts,

I don’t think there is any question about that…advantage. [I’m] sure your research could find out that there is a preference and it’s just designed and setup for Whites in particular

I don’t know if there is any question about that.

After an inquiry about whether the expectation for Black managers to work twice as hard and be twice as good is beyond the general expectation of all industry leaders to excel, Betty remarks,
No, I don’t think you’re reading into that, and I don’t think that that’s anything new as far as corporate America. You know, I think that there’ve been enough studies that prove that point. And I think that people have come out honestly to say that. And in a follow up about whether gender and race are the sources of her unbridled fear about how her work will be evaluated in the workplace, Nelly promptly rejoins,

Of course [they are]…I’m smart enough about how business gets done to know that that’s what matters. Results affect this. Now, I’m also smart enough to recognize that…I have a higher benchmark to execute at than others would who get credibility, may immediately have credibility, or may immediately believe their ideas are valuable who don’t have the same burden.

Analysis

Everything was ultimately interpreted from a critical theoretical perspective, given my aforementioned stance, and the detailed analytic techniques and procedures for developing theory presented by Strauss and Corbin (1998) were flexibly and creatively utilized. In addition to data categories, two concepts that are repeatedly referenced throughout the authors’ explanations are properties and dimensions. Properties are “the general or specific characteristics or attributes of a category,” and dimensions “represent the location of a property along a continuum or range” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 117). Strauss and Corbin believe the microscopic examination of research data in uncovering concepts and relationships and methodically developing property and dimension categories is an important initial step of the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

There are two basic operations of analysis central to the development of theory: (1) asking good questions (e.g., sensitizing, theoretical, practical and structural, and guiding
queries) that advance understandings of concepts and bring the research to a productive conclusion and (2) making theoretical comparisons that not only contrast incident to incident/object to object for classification purposes but also prompt reflection about category properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Asking appropriate and fruitful questions was critical in placing study participants at ease and generating descriptive and focused data, while theoretical comparisons generated effective categorization of various experiences, perceptions, and emergent concepts. Interview questions arose largely from respondent commentary and iterative analysis of previous interviews and increasingly relevant literature.

Analytic tools are specific methods and procedures that facilitate analysis and expand discovery by making comparisons and asking questions. These techniques increased analyst sensitivity, helped root out bias, and assisted in overcoming analytic blocks. The analytic arsenal included the use of questioning; the analysis of words, phrases, or sentences; keeping a research journal to track thinking during data collection and analysis; and several comparative devices—incident to incident/object to object (seeking similarities and differences among properties for classification); the flip-flop technique (turning a concept inside out or upside down to gain a different perspective); close in and far out comparisons of two or more phenomena (contrasting data incidents to, respectively, similar or dissimilar recollections from personal experience or the literature in search of elusive meaning); and waving the red flag (recognizing when either my own or the participants’ assumptions, beliefs, or biases were interfering with the analysis) (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Given the rich oral tradition of the Black community and the intelligence of the research population, close examination of sentences, phrases, and individual words was very helpful in uncovering and contrasting meaning among participants. My first task following each interview, however, involved spending an uninterrupted period of at least 15 minutes reviewing scribbled thoughts and impressions for subsequent analysis along with the corresponding transcript. Despite the extensive notations made during the actual interviews, this exercise was essential in documenting sights, sounds, and/or feelings that are virtually impossible to capture in a recording. The aforementioned comparative devices were used as necessary to combat theoretical inertia and foster idea synthesis.

Data Coding

The basic types of data coding in grounded theory development are open, axial, and selective. Open coding is the analytic process whereby concepts are established and their properties and dimensions are revealed in the data. Three ways of accomplishing open coding are line-by-line analysis, whole sentence or paragraph examination, or perusing an entire document (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I carefully reviewed interview transcripts, corresponding memos, and other relevant data for classification cues.

Axial coding links categories with their subcategories and is called axial because coding takes place near the axis of a category and relates categories on the basis of properties and dimensions. The objective of axial coding is to initiate the process of reconstructing data that were broken apart by open coding. Relating categories to their subcategories yields more precise and complete explanations about phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The process of axial coding should, therefore, begin the process of theory development in earnest.
Selective coding is a system for integrating and refining theory. Categories are organized around a central or core explanatory concept using strategies like sorting and reviewing memos, telling or writing the storyline, and diagramming. Once the theoretical scheme is established, theory is refined by trimming excess information and rounding out poorly developed categories via theoretical sampling and data/respondent validation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Once analysis reached the level of selective coding, a more evolved theory materialized. Effective follow up involved determining which categories were truly related to the core and which were ancillary, unrelated, or underdeveloped.

*Theoretical Sampling*

The notion of theoretical sampling simply implies that sampling evolves during the research process based on relevant concepts that emerge from analysis, rather than being predetermined at the outset. While sampling did not continue until all categories were well developed and no new or noteworthy data materialized, for practical reasons, it generally became more focused and specific as the research advanced. With open coding, for example, it was desirable to hold data gathering open to all possibilities that offered great opportunity for discovery. During axial coding, the focus changed to new or previously documented incidents and events that enhanced the identification of significant variations. Finally, very selective sampling or selecting documents, persons, and sites that optimized chances for comparative analysis was important during selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although the plan was to interview 20 individuals (10 femyle and 10 male), I was open to allowing evolving and practical data considerations to drive participant characteristics, whether the basis was a more specified income level, geographic region, age group, or some other factor.
Analytic Memos

Memos and diagrams vitally contribute to theory by helping researchers chart the development of the analytic process. Memos include the products of coding, offer guidance for theoretical sampling, and allow analysts to mentally parse ideas. Specific types of memos include (1) code notes, which contain the actual products of open, axial, and selective coding, (2) theoretical notes, which sensitize and summarize analysts’ thoughts and ideas about theoretical sampling and other issues, (3) operational notes, which consist of procedural directions and reminders, and (4) summary memos that amalgamate subject matter from several memos. Diagrams are schematic portrayals of the associations among concepts. Mini-frameworks, for example, are small, graphical theoretical configurations generated by coding around a concept, and integrative diagrams synthesize ideas from several unconnected diagrams (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Analytic and reflective memos were used extensively. Memo writing frequently resulted in actionable research steps, fleshed out muddled thinking and clarified existing ideas, and generated new and productive thought. The following summary memo, typed Friday, August 25, 2006, for example, represents a critical development in thinking about how to approach this venture. These ideas were hugely important in dispelling a dangerously paralyzing inertia and jumpstarting the literature review, which helped frame the interview process that constitutes the heart of this research exercise.

After more thinking, it occurs to me that although I was so clueless about where exactly to begin my literature review, I should simply begin with my feelings, thoughts, and assumptions regarding the subject at hand. Since all that I have read, researched, taught, and experienced (as a Black, albeit not high-, salaried hospitality
and tourism professional myself) will inform my approach and shape the research process, it makes sense to begin by gathering information relevant to my current thinking.

After all, there are reasons why I believe what I believe and feel what I feel. Presenting supporting (and non-supporting?) evidence may help readers and potential critics appreciate that my feelings are not merely prejudices or gut reactions, but grounded in scholarly (and other) discourse.

As this research project progresses, it will be interesting to see how the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and experiences (realities) I encounter (uncover) in the field compare with this literature and my preliminary thinking.

While notes were taken during each of the interviews, I also drafted comments while reviewing the taped recordings. These notes and comments were generally handwritten in an informal and free flowing manner, featuring underlined, circled, boxed, and crossed-out text, directional arrows, dashes, asterisks, etc. The following code and operational note example from Saturday, August 1, 2008 highlights key participant feedback, establishes connections between observations from multiple respondents, draws parallels to earlier ideas, provides instructions for future interviews, and outlines directions for subsequent literature review.

twice as good scenario – Ronnie work twice as hard (check with others)

sooner or later those things pay off – Ronnie

(But Penny says sometimes they do & sometimes they don’t.)

could be in agreement if you’re considering different
companies (leaving & going elsewhere).

use expression I want to tell your story

moving forward w/interviews

personal responsibility – holding must let
go of Ebonics, instead of attributing language
differences to diff culture

extreme examples representations of Black
(dreadlocks – Ronnie, zoot suits – Nelly)
lime green suit

Requisite for success not previously considered.
adaptation willingness to conform – Penny said as much

LIT

Ronny said when in Rome

vs. selling out

unsolicited

Assumption Barrier – never let it be what keeps me back.

Ronny Doesn’t this echo an assumption

Often, briefly scribbled and undated notes were used to memorialize quick thoughts and provide important guidance for the shorter or longer term. Two theoretically-based examples are the single-sentence directive to “Focus now on womyn” and the slightly longer and more specific:

– Needed womyn in general

– femyles 250k & over
– Males 250k & over
– Anyone 500k & over

A one-line operational example, designed to enhance the interview process, is “I’m not asking salary question right.” And a provocative short statement intended to spur deeper thought and analysis reads “The issue is that there is a Black accent.”

*Grounded Theory-Based Analytical Steps*

Table 6 delineates the 13 grounded theory-based analytical steps that were used to frame the backdrop, acquire and analyze data, and develop research conclusions in this study. The first two steps in the analysis process involved drafting the foundational pre-data collection assumptions and conducting a structured literature review. The third step was extensive note taking during telephone and in-person interviews. Fourth, individual participant narratives were crafted based on the aforementioned notations. Fifth, 16 of the interviews were transcribed via a professional transcription service that formally signed a confidentiality agreement, while I transcribed the remaining four interviews. Sixth, as transcriptions were completed, an exhaustive line-by-line analysis of each was conducted as part of the open coding process. Open coding focused largely on naming and establishing concepts and generally characterizing incidents based on their data evident properties and dimensions. Seventh, once this process was completed, the resultant coding incidents, hereafter referred to as *coins*, were amalgamated into 30 expressive subcategories as part of axial coding. Incidentally, while phenomenologists, in particular, will be familiar with the term *significant statements*, coins are introduced here for two reasons: (1) my methodological approach, as previously discussed, is an amalgamation of grounded theory, hermeneutics, and phenomenology, and (2) significant statements are
Table 6

*Thirteen Grounded Theory-Based Analytical Steps*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step Number</th>
<th>Researcher Action</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Draft three to ten pre-data collection assumptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Conduct a structured literature review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Make extensive notes during interviews.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Utilize notes to draft participant narratives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Transcribe interviews.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Conduct open coding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 7</td>
<td>Conduct axial coding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 8</td>
<td>Conduct selective coding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 9</td>
<td>Continuously refine participant narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 10</td>
<td>Provide a textual example from all relevant participants for each main category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 11</td>
<td>Provide a single example for each subcategory using as many different participants as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 12</td>
<td>Review additional literature regarding emergent aspects of main categories as necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 13</td>
<td>Draft conclusion by discussing emergent theory, revisiting pre-data collection assumptions, and synthesizing final literature review.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
defined as expressly related to a phenomenon in question (Creswell, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Moustakas, 1994) while coins are minute conceptualizations or raw results of the first round of open coding that may or may not be germane to emergent constructs or theory. Rather, coins are atomic particles of meaning that are either discarded or classified as relevant via higher order analysis and synthesis. During the axial stage of the analysis, the 30 generated subcategories morphed into four main categories plus two minor categories: one for the relatively small number of coins that did not neatly fit into the main four and another, smaller still, which curiously overlapped and complicated the others. Eighth, during the integrative and distillate selective coding process, a single, overarching, and incorporating concept emerged from the four main categories. The ninth analytical step was the ongoing process of fine-tuning participant narratives. Refinement began immediately after the initial draft of the participant narratives in Step 2 and continued throughout. The tenth step of analysis involved reviewing participant transcripts in search of an example for each of the five determined main categories. The process was conducted one main category at a time across all respondents. Eleventh, once illustrations, where available, were obtained for each main category, a search was conducted to find a single example for each of the 25 remaining subcategories that represented as many of the 20 study participants as possible. For the twelfth step, there was a return to the literature to research emergent aspects of the established main categories not previously addressed. The thirteenth step, finally, entailed drafting a conclusion by synthesizing the final literature review with the emergent theory.

Below is a sentence from Joeey’s transcription that was open coded via line-by-line analysis. Note that all researcher coins appear in [[double brackets]].
At the same time, especially since I took a human resources path in this industry [[[background]]], I'm very well aware of the fact that anything I do is going to get magnified 40,000 times [[[awareness]]] [[[different treatment]]], not just because of my role, but also because I am African-American in my role [[[race disadvantage]]] [[["role"]]].

While the eventual subcategories to which these coins were assigned appear below, Table 7 lists the subcategory titles, number of coins, and subcategory coin names for the entire study data set.

- **Background/Upbringing** ← background
- **Awareness** ← awareness
- **Discrimination** ← different treatment, race disadvantage
- **Experience** ← “role”
- **Race** ← race disadvantage

Observe that *race disadvantage* is assigned both to the category of *Discrimination* and to the category of *Race*. This is because being disadvantaged because of one’s race is clearly discriminatory and race disadvantage, as a concept, is obviously linked with the perception one’s racial classification. Note, also, that the coin *role* appears in quotation marks because it is what Strauss and Corbin (1998) call an *in vivo code*, which means it was lifted from the participant’s remarks as opposed to being developed by me.

While the aforementioned coins were ultimately organized into the following main and minor study categories, Table 8 provides information about category title, number of coins, and category coin names for the entire study data set.

- **Discrimination** ← different treatment, race disadvantage, race disadvantage
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory Title</th>
<th>Number of Coins</th>
<th>Subcategory Coin Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>assistance, board service, comfortability, corporate culture, corporate politics, divorce, familiarity, family, golf, humyn nature, legacy, likability, mentorship/sponsorship, networks/networking, ownership, reaching back, reciprocity, role modeling, teaching, trust, uncomfortability, work life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>advantage-White, annoyance, bias, challenges, color time, different treatment, difficulty, disadvantage, discrimination, double standard, golf, humyn nature, limitations, male domination, obviations, pecking orders, pigeon-holing, powerlessness, prejudice, pressure, privilege, proving, questioning, racism, role playing, rules-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcategory Title</td>
<td>Number of Coins</td>
<td>Subcategory Coin Names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>different/unspoken, separation, sexism, shock, stereotypes/stereotyping, surprise, testing, threatening, twice as good, unfair/unequal treatment, unfairness, unintentional/non-malicious accountability, authority, autonomy, background-some, Black firsts, board service, company/staff size, coordination, credentials, dues paying, experience, experience-based industry, expertise, exposure, job evaluation, job performance, job satisfaction, job title, leadership, loyalty, nerve center positions, opening, operations, power, preparation, qualifications, responsibility, resume, role, sports, work hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>competence, competition, confidence, excellence, incompetence, intelligence, non-excellence, over-preparation, over-qualification, presentation-showing up, production-expectation, recognition,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcategory Title</td>
<td>Number of Coins</td>
<td>Subcategory Coin Names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>308</td>
<td>results, results-oriented, safety-excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>302</td>
<td>as job, satisfaction, self-confidence, success, twice as good, value, value-creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>disappointment, idioms, sustainability, time period, unclear, unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>appearance, attire, attractiveness, hair, height, image, personal style, the look, weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>advantage-Black, advantage-race, Black firsts, color/color time, complexion, minority, race, race and gender, race work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>certification, education, historically Black college or university (HBCU), learning, lessons, teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>compensation, compensation-pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obviations</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>activism, advantage-adjusted perception, bulletproofing, code switching, concern, creativity, don’t dos, entrepreneurship,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcategory Title</td>
<td>Number of Coins</td>
<td>Subcategory Coin Names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>interdependence, obviations, open-mindedness, openness, refusal, speech, suggestions, understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Progression</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>career planning, career progression, entrée, fast-tracking, future plans, management trainee program, retirement, special program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>advantage-under-representation, overrepresentation, representation, under-representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>company superiority, difference, diversity, gay culture, globalization, identity perspective, immigrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>democracy, desegregation, difficulty, filter, frustration, misperception, optimism, perception, perspective, pessimism, philosophy, value/value point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>awareness, conformity, game playing/rules, knowledge, legacy, pessimism-some, powerlessness-some,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcategory Title</td>
<td>Number of Coins</td>
<td>Subcategory Coin Names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reality, resignation, unawareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-image</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>blessed, good/great life, personality, self-confidence, self-description, vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>access, advantage, exceptions/exception to the rule, growth, opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>industry attractiveness, recruitment, retention, talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive/Ambition</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>aspiration, competition, drive, enjoyment, motivation, passion, pride, uncommitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background/Upbringing</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>background, upbringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>gender, femyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>communication, code switching, difficulty-articulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>age, generation/generational, youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>change-improvement, improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>desire, expectations, goals, goal-setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>famous names, people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>bulletproofing, fairness, standards, treatment-fair, equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcategory Title</td>
<td>Number of Coins</td>
<td>Subcategory Coin Names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Tent</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>anti-menial labor, gaming, hospitality, possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Bible, blessed, faith, spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental conditions</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Black/minority willingness to say whatever, economy, environmental conditions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Experience* ← background, “role”

*Awareness* ← awareness

It is important to point out that the four main and two minor categories are mutually exclusive. That is, each of the 5,337 coins eventually only appears in one of these six categories.

Here is another line-by-line open coded sentence from Joeey, followed by the analytically designated subcategories.

But, I think that I've been fast-tracked [[fast-tracking factors]], and a lot of that has to do to some degree, talent [[excellence]]; to some degree, opportunity [[“opportunity”]]; to some degree, access [[“access”]]; to some degree, relationships [[“relationships”]] and having great mentors and teachers that have influence [[mentorship]].

*Career Progression* ← fast-tracking factors
### Table 8

**Emergent Interview Data Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Title</th>
<th>Number of Coins</th>
<th>Category Coin Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Compensation, discrimination, diversity, gender, obviations, perspective, race,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>1040</td>
<td>Career progression, education, experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>Background/upbringing, recruitment, relationships, self-image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>Appearance, drive/ambition, excellence, opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>Awareness, conformity, game playing/rules, knowledge, legacy, pessimism-some,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>powerlessness-some, reality, resignation, unawareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Excellence ← excellence

Opportunity ← “access,” “opportunity”

Excellence ← excellence

Opportunity ← “access,” “opportunity”

Relationships ← mentorship, “relationships”

Notice in this case that although the subcategory coin classification happened to be mutually exclusive, this was not a requirement. Observe, also, that the quotation generated three in vivo codes and that two of these are actually subcategory title coins.

The main and minor category assortment of these coins is as follows:

Experience ← fast-tracking factors

Relationships ← mentorship, “relationships”

Excellence ← “access,” excellence, “opportunity”

Below is a longer one-sentence quote from Nelly along with subcategory coin assignments that feature two double listings and three in vivo codes.

We’re always going to have stereotypes [“stereotypes”] and images and history that plays out [pessimism] [realism] and how we help and I’m often asked about meetings where you’re sitting around the table with owners of hotels [hotel owners as prejudiced, racist, uncomfortable] who often are old school [“old school”] kind of old boy network [“old boy network”], got their money from an oil well in Texas or some kind of craziness and they’re not used to working with folks who look or walk or act like me or other people that I know [exposure] [[familiarity]].
Discrimination ← hotel owners as prejudiced, racist, uncomfortable; “old boy network;” “old school;” “stereotypes”

Perspective ← pessimism, realism

Awareness ← realism

Diversity ← exposure

Relationships ← familiarity, “old boy network”

Since the old boy network in this case has gender and racial overtones, the Discrimination subcategory placement is appropriate. And because the network itself is an informal association of people, it is also logically classified as Relationships. As well, the coin realism is appropriately assigned both to Perspective and Awareness because the lens of reality is a particularized viewpoint and its full recognition creates a specialized consciousness capable of shaping subsequent behavior.

In main and minor category terms, these coins were grouped as follows:

Discrimination ← exposure, hotel owners as prejudiced, racist, uncomfortable; “old boy network;” “old school;” perspective; “stereotypes”

Relationships ← familiarity, “old boy network”

Awareness ← realism

Though the single sentence quote from Tammy below is nearly as long as the one from Nelly, it resulted in fewer coins and less subcategories.

I had a mentor [[mentorship]] who was a White male [[Whaleorship]] who recognized my skills, abilities, my work ethic, my sort of stick-to-it’ness [[positive qualities]] and believed that I could do anything [[belief]] [[faith]] and he helped navigate some of my career choices and really worked to make sure that
I had opportunities [[sponsorship]] that would sort of catapult me over other individuals [[fast-tracking]] that might have been at the same level at the time.

*Relationships* ⇐ mentorship, Whaleorship, belief/faith in others, sponsorship

*Experience* ⇐ positive qualities

*Career Progression* ⇐ fast-tracking

As this quote is essentially about mentorship, sponsorship, and receiving the kind of support that recognizes talent and expedites careers, the subcategories of *Relationships*, *Experience*, and *Career Progression* sufficiently contain the coins; and there are no in vivo codes. Incidentally, I resisted the urge to code the coins *belief* and *faith* separately under the *Spirituality* subcategory since the terms together represented championing others and were best cast jointly as *Relationships*.

The main and minor study categories applicable here are as follows:

*Experience* ⇐ fast-tracking, positive qualities

*Relationships* ⇐ mentorship, Whaleorship, belief/faith in others, sponsorship

Now that the methodology has been explained in terms of population sampling, research instrument and process, and data analysis, let us turn our attention to the resultant participant narratives and data themes.
CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

The purpose of this study was to uncover and present a rich, theoretically expressed understanding of the experience of salaried Black hospitality and tourism professionals who earn at least $100,000 annually (HSBHTPs). Grounded theory methodology was the vehicle employed to engage 20 members of this rarefied population and analyze their comments. The study provided an opportunity for these individuals to deeply consider who and what they are, what they have accomplished, and the broad socio-cultural factors that have impacted their industry experience and career progression. Twelve male and eight female executives, employed in eight Northeastern, Midwestern, Southern, and Western U.S. states and the District of Columbia were interviewed for an average of 74 minutes (See Table 9). Five hold the title of general manager, two are presidents of their organizations, two are ranked-vice presidents, three are vice presidents-plus (meaning they hold an additional title), two are vice presidents, two are directors, and there is one corporate manager, one department chairman, one ranked director, and one ranked general manager. Six of the participants fall in the 45-49 age range, five are 40-44, three are 50-54, two are 35-39, two are 30-34, one is 60-64, and one is 55-59. Nine of these individuals earn $100,000-$149,999; five are salaried in the $150,000-$199,999 range; three are paid $250,000 or more; two make $200,000-$249,999; and one grosses between $125,000 and $175,000 annually. Ten of the participants are employed with five different hotel companies, five are engaged in two different gaming contexts, two are non-profit service providers, one is employed at a convention and visitors bureau, one is an educator, and one works in a food and beverage context.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Interview Length (in minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debby</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joeey</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenny</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronny</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taffy</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Pseudonym</td>
<td>Interview Length (in minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinny</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average interview length</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four main categories of hospitality and tourism, based on the work of Walker (1999) delineated at the outset of this project are (1) lodging, (2) foodservice, (3) travel, and (4) recreation and business. While the ten hotel-involved participants and one of the gaming area respondents who manages a hotel are categorized under lodging; four of the gaming industry participants, the convention and visitors bureau employee, and one of the non-profit service providers fall into the recreation and business group; and the food and beverage category is represented; the initial classification scheme does not provide an appropriate designation for the remaining industry service provider or the educator. So, an other category is being added to better represent the full range of hospitality employment sectors. The other classification will encompass workers in the United States Department of Labor’s (2004) Bureau of Labor Statistics categories educational services, employment services; hotel and tourism-related advertising and public relations services occupations; and management, scientific, and technical consulting services. Thus, the five main categories of hospitality and tourism are (1) lodging, (2) foodservice, (3) travel, (4) recreation and business, and (5) other, and one of the industry service providers and the educator from the current study are categorized as other.
While a host of important similarities and differences were gleaned through the use of Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) constant comparative analysis, this chapter focuses on generally sharing each of the 20 participants’ stories. Interviews are the heart of this work in that they yield the richly complex experiences, which coalesce into an overarching narrative and shared strategies for achieving hospitality and tourism managerial success. Each narrative is preceded by a pseudonym, a brief descriptor that succinctly characterizes a major element of the participant’s personality, and a quote that embodies the essence of the corresponding business or personal philosophy (Seidman, 1998).

Penny

The Value Manager

“You have to create value for yourself every single day. Nothing is owed to you. Nothing is guaranteed.”

Penny is a general manager at a medium-sized hotel in a major metropolitan area. Sxe is a light-skinned womyn between 40 and 44 years old, who holds a bachelor’s degree and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. Sxe describes herself as a firm believer in mentors and widely gathering advice before making major decisions, although sxe believes the onus is on the mentee to seek out industry leaders. While the majority of Penny’s mentors have been White males, her current mentors also include femyles as well as Black and Latino individuals. Sxe prides herself in being willing to do whatever ethical thing is asked of her and is fiercely determined to make sure her superiors always see value in what sxe does.

Penny believes the fact that sxe is femyle has a more significant negative impact on her daily work life than her race. While there are some internal pressures, sxe feels that
guests, in particular, sometimes have difficulty understanding that sxe’s in charge of the lodging property sxe runs. Penny perceives that sxe more commonly meets resistance and receives less respect than her male colleagues, although sxe says sxe has never allowed her gender or her race to be a problem. Although sxe feels there have been particularized challenges related to her status as a Black femyle, sxe concedes that it has probably worked to her advantage at times and even allowed her to move forward more quickly in the organization than sxe otherwise might.

Penny believes that sxe is relatively fairly compensated, though sxe imagines sxe’s in the medium range and doubts sxe’s in the top 20-30 percentile. Penny works hard to always be successful in part because sxe worries that future Black femyles will be judged by what sxe does. As a light-skinned African-American femyle, sxe supposes sxe has had an easier time than sxe might if sxe were dark-skinned. Penny has always dressed conservatively, as sxe believes Blacks have to be cognizant of fitting in with others.

As a manager, sxe is concerned about the perception and reality of fairness and consciously works to balance her management committee from a femyle-male perspective and spend equal amounts of time with employees from different racial backgrounds. And while things are not perfect and sxe has not had an easy time, Penny acknowledges that the situation for Blacks in the hospitality and tourism industry has improved.

Penny’s suggestions for improving the status of Blacks in the industry include developing better mentorship programs, especially between Blacks who have already reached high organizational levels and those who are working their way up; encouraging more affinity groups in hospitality and tourism companies to foster more networking and
socialization; talking to college students before graduation to help make sure they start off on the right foot; establishing targeted partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities; and promoting more Black entrepreneurship, so Blacks can “call [their] own shots.” Penny is concerned about the next generation of Blacks in the hospitality workplace. Sxe thinks they may not be as tough or resilient as their predecessors and may have difficulty learning how to play the corporate game.

Ronny

The Personal Responsibility Advocate

“We need to have a conversation about the…junk in our trunk!”

Ronny is president and founder of a national non-profit organization whose mission revolves around providing such services as development and training for hospitality company employees. He is a light-skinned man 50-54 years of age, who has a bachelor’s degree and earns between $125,000 and $175,000 annually.

When it comes to issues of equity and employee treatment, Ronny believes it is critically important to provide a sound business rationale for companies to do the right thing. He argues that benefits like increased competitiveness, an enhanced corporate image, and a stronger connection to the needs and desires of a diverse community are drivers of the continued promotion of more and more people of color and womyn to executive management positions. Ronny believes that all people should be respected for their contributions to an increasingly diverse workforce. While they sometimes are not given credence or credit, for example, he feels there are many White males who do a great job of moving diversity forward just as members of various other groups do.
In response to questioning, Ronny talked about general differences between his ethnic group and other Blacks in America, due to the fact that he is able to trace his ancestry back to a particular African nation, though his family has been here for generations. And, although both he and some of his children have been “stopped at gun point” because of race and he has been denied employment “because the company was not ready to have a Black general manager,” he has never let these kinds of things stop him from continuing to achieve.

Ronny says he has “developed a reputation [for] being able to adapt or do what needs” to be done in various contexts. He operates under the assumption that he has to be “twice as prepared,” “work twice as hard,” and be “twice as good to get ahead.” And, when it comes to things like work attire, Ronny understands that there is a corporate norm and appreciates that when one is in Rome, one must do as the Romans. Although he has faced race-related challenges and believes that Blacks have to “climb greater hurdles” in a system that has been “set up for Whites and White males, in particular,” Ronny knows things are “clearly” better than they used to be. And, while he believes men generally get more opportunities than womyn, he feels the playing field, especially for White womyn, is beginning to level. Interestingly, he argues that there is a “Black country club” just as there is a White one. And he speculates that “if this were a Black world,” things would be unbalanced in the opposite direction. While Ronny feels skin color is an issue among Blacks, he also believes there is “a penalty [in the workplace] for being too dark.” He shares that he has been fast tracked in the past, but says it was because he was “better than the others”—“never because [he] was Black.”
Ronny’s recommendations for making things better for Blacks in hospitality and tourism revolve around the notions of education and personal responsibility. He believes the Black community needs to reward academic excellence instead of focusing so strongly on athletic achievement, for example. Ronny feels that it is important that we be honest with ourselves about our state of affairs and the challenges we face. He maintains that excellence and the virtues of education must be extolled at every level—school, community, church, etc. Ronny points out that the “industry [cannot] benefit from under-prepared students.” And since many successful Blacks no longer “live in the hood,” he advocates mentoring, role-modeling, voting our interests, and contributing financially we cannot do so physically. Ronny does not believe the hospitality industry will do much more to try to make things better for Blacks. Instead, he cites “issues with work ethic and work motivation” as part of the problem and insists that “we need to have a conversation about the…junk in our trunk!”

Joeey

The Prince of Providence

“I just happen to be…blessed and highly favored. I end up in the right situations at the right time.”

Joeey is a corporate manager in the headquarters of an upscale hotel company. He is a dark-skinned man between 35 and 39, who has some college education, but does not have a college degree, and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year.

Joeey spoke a lot about the employment opportunities he has been afforded. He places a huge premium on the mentorship and guidance he has received during his career and says he was identified early on as “someone who might have legs down the road” in
his current company. Joeey attributes a good deal of his credibility and success to a
strong employment background. He feels that his typically rapid decision-making
strategies and his balanced and empathetic approach to management via his “team
member filter” have been critical to his career progression.

Joeey is grateful for “very good mentors and teachers” and considers himself
fortunate. “I just happen to be…blessed and highly favored. I end up in the right
situations at the right time.” While he believes he had has to work harder than others to
prove that he is capable, he does not think the lack of a college degree has seriously
limited his growth, although it may have reduced some of his options.

Joeey sees the impact of being Black in the workplace as two-fold. Because he can be
categorized as “articulate,” “clean-cut,” and someone who is well-spoken, on the one
hand, being Black has been helpful, since he has been perceived as “an exception to the
rule.” On the other hand, however, Joeey feels he has had “to do and approach things in a
different way to get what [he] wants” because there is an “assumption” that he “probably
shouldn’t be where [he] is.” Also, he says there is “always a sense of having to prove
[himself].” Joeey believes corporate America is imbalanced because of “an old boys’
type of deal” which results in inequity not just for people of color, but also for womyn.

One of the bright spots that Joeey mentioned was the National Society of Minorities
in Hospitality (NSMH). He thinks the significant involvement of White students will
result in more of the future establishment being unafraid of genuine interaction with
people of color. Joeey actually suggests that “75-80% [of Whites] are uncomfortable”
around Blacks. While people do not always behave in the best ways, he feels the word
racist is “attached to far too many” as people are merely “comfortable with what they
know.” Joeey posits that if his company’s “owners were Black, there would probably be more Black people” in different positions.

Joeey pays close attention to what he does because he feels that “if [he] screws up, there won’t be another” person like him in his position. He sees this as unfortunate and unfair because “when you’re Caucasian, you’re taken on your own merits.” Interestingly, Joeey explains that his mother went out of her way to make sure he spoke proper English so he would not be disadvantaged in a predominantly White society.

Joeey views the reality of gender in the workplace as a “two-sided coin.” On one side, he believes it is “much easier to advance the Black femyle than the Black male” since organizations are essentially able to get “two birds with one stone” by promoting someone who is simultaneously minority and femyle. Joeey points out, however, that instead of the proverbial glass ceiling many of these womyn now face the challenges of a “sticky floor,” still finding it difficult to rise as far as they might otherwise. Joeey also worries that too many Black men are “not willing to do what it takes” to get ahead. He attributes this reluctance to a “sense of false pride” and “a problem with being subservient.” Whether male or femyle, however, Joeey believes those who make it are not simply good, but “have an amazing skill” and regularly perform “above and beyond” the average.

Joeey is very clear about the fact that he “[comes] across as non-threatening.” He reveals that he is quite “conscious of who [he is],” “what [he] look[s] like,” “how [he] present[s] [himself] and things,” and “how much [he] is going to have to go in that role.” Joeey implies that his physical appearance requires him to “go out of [his] way to be non-
threatening.” And he quips that “you’re not going to find a lot of challenging Black folks in corporate America” because there is a “fear of how angry we are.”

Joeey feels that success is a product of talent, opportunity, access, and relationships. And while he views the system as unfair, he also believes that “Black people…need to take more responsibility” in determining where they end up. Joeey’s recommendations for more Black success include spending the requisite time thinking, planning, and designing; being more willing to step outside of our comfort zones and align with people who can truly help us; providing a swift kick “in the behind” to those who need it; increasing the number of Black mentors who are willing to help; generally expanding industry outreach via organizations like NSMH; and forming a hospitality organization for Black professionals focused on networking and providing scholarships to students. While Joeey is encouraged by what he sees, he does not believe the hospitality industry as a whole can do much more. He believes it is “those with a personal vested interested” who must now act.

Nelly
Senior Sister Girl

“Now I understand, where I didn’t before what it’s like to have people subordinate to you who probably are your sisters—your sister girls.”

Nelly is a regional vice president for a major hotel corporation. She is a light-skinned womyn between 40 and 44 years old, who holds both a bachelor’s degree and a master’s of business administration (MBA) and earns between $200,000 and $249,999 annually. Interestingly, Nelly was born in another country, but she grew up in the U.S. from a very early age. She is relentlessly dedicated to being recognized as outstanding, and she
describes her overall style and approach as very open and communicative. Nelly is “good with people” and considers herself “an expert at leadership and talent development.”

While sxe has “been young in every role that [sxe’s] had,” sxe believes sxe’s worked harder than others in her age group. Nelly feels that sxe received some great exposure early in her career and credits her success, in part, to “some White men who played very critical roles [and] believed in me more than I believed in myself.” Sxe also attributes a good deal of her advancement to “an unbridled fear of failure—probably to an unhealthy level.” Nelly reveals, “Every day to me feels like I’m in my 90 day probation….I can’t relax.” While part of this emanates from not wanting to let her family down, sxe also just wants to be safe and secure in her position. And, although Nelly believes that sxe “deliver[s] great results,” “build[s] great teams,” and is always going to be needed, sxe feels sxe has “a higher benchmark to execute at than others who may have immediate credibility.” Nelly is clear that there is “an old boy network” and sees the challenges Blacks face in hospitality as “a function of being in the business.” Sxe is grateful that her company paid for her to go to graduate school and believes that her educational attainment is high since her boss and many of her counterparts do not have an MBA.

When asked about skin complexion, Nelly responds “the more attractive you are, however you define it, the better.” Sxe thinks that Black men in general have a more difficult time connecting in the industry. Nelly argues that “the civil rights movement has been wildly successful for White womyn.” And while sxe believes that her base pay is probably fair, Nelly is “fairly confident” that some of her peers have asked for additional perks that sxe did not and “others get concessions made to them that weren’t made to [her].” Sxe thinks that White men, in particular, “ask for everything….They won’t filter
themselves.” Nelly knows that sxe is different and that that difference is not particularly helpful. Sxe says, “I’m never unaware that I’m a minority womyn. So, that lens is on everything that I do.” Nelly is happy, however, to see some of the changes that more Blacks in upper management positions have wrought even throughout the course of her own career. “Now I understand, where I didn’t before,” sxe says “what it’s like to have people subordinate to you who probably are your sisters—your sister girls.”

Nelly believes one of the challenges of getting more young Black people into the industry is a stigma associated with menial work, like cleaning toilets and making beds. To improve the numbers, sxe believes we must continue to challenge how people view the industry, focus on getting the credentials that can help move us ahead, develop great oral and written communication skills, and pursue opportunities for ownership in hospitality. Ultimately, however, sxe conceptualizes the solution to Black managerial under-representation in the industry as improved preparation meeting equitable advocacy.

Terry

Home Aware

“You think about [your Blackness]....Yeah, you feel it.”

Terry is global director for a support area of an international hotel company. He is “not particularly dark, but by no means yellow,” 45-49 years of age, holds a bachelor’s degree, and earns between $100,000 and $149,000 a year. While Terry thinks his gender may be an advantage “in some instances with some groups,” he understands that “stereotypically African-American males can be threatening to some people.” Concerning race specifically, he says sometimes people do not realize that he is Black and are surprised when he meets them in person.
In terms of compensation within his organization, Terry says “we pretty much know where we all are;” and, he believes he is compensated equally and appropriately. Terry mentions, however, that he was hired by a White male friend from school who is the same age, and he figures that his friend probably earned 35 or 40 thousand dollars more than him at the time. While Terry thinks “the numbers” are most important, he believes that complexion may have an impact on one’s customer base at some level since there is “bias against some dark-skinned people.” He feels the reality and challenges of race are “everywhere” as evidenced by the industry’s continued “emphasis on diversity and inclusion.”

When asked whether he is generally “aware” of his Blackness, Terry responds in the affirmative, saying “You think about it….Yeah, you feel it.” Though he works from home, he talked about periodically attending a company meeting with nearly 100 individuals and only four or five of them being Black. Terry does not think the under-representation of Blacks in the upper ranks of hospitality is due to any shortage. “I’m sure that they’re enough qualified individuals that happen to be African-American out there,” he opines. The good news, Terry concedes, is that things have “gotten better” and “the industry is on a pretty good path.”

To the question of whether he’s ever been fast tracked or always gone the long hard way, Terry bluntly states, “I don't think that I've been fast-tracked in any way, shape, or form.” He does not have any White mentors to speak of, though he does have a White male friend in the industry with whom he golfs twice a month. Terry views reaching back as critically important in getting more Black talent into hospitality management. He feels
that industry insiders have to show students the exciting side since “a lot…look at the
industry and don’t know the breadth.”

Harry

Homegrown World Citizen

“Certainly before 10 years old, I somehow acquired a world view…that the rest of the
world looked a lot more like me than what is portrayed in the United States.”

Harry is “chairman” of a university hotel and restaurant management department.

Given a choice between a light-skinned and a dark-skinned group, he would place
himself in the “darker group.” Harry is between 60 and 64 years old; holds a bachelor’s, a
master’s, and a doctorate degree; and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 annually. He
describes his job as a “full fledged management position,” speaks fondly of the more
typical management experiences he has held in lodging and property management
companies, and sees himself as “a manager who has elected to be in the classroom and
direct educational processes.”

Since he believes that succeeding is all about being recognized and “you
automatically stand out” “if you are a person of color in this country,” Harry feels that
“it’s kind of easy [for a Black person] to lead.” Harry explains one of the things that
precipitated his positive attitude in this area.

Early in life, seven, eight, certainly before 10 years old, I somehow acquired a world
view, which was kind of rare back in the 1950s, that the rest of the world looked a lot
more like me than what is portrayed in the United States. So from that time on, from
before 10 years old, I always thought of myself as a citizen of the world and really
didn’t pay a lot of attention to some of the discriminatory practices that were in and
around. And I always regarded myself in a majority if you look at the world and refused to see myself in terms of a southern [particular state] raising.

Although “a lot of White people think Blacks would like to be White,” Harry says, “being Black in my mind has always been an advantage.”

Harry talks about the lack of Black people at many of the professional conferences and meetings that he attends. And he says the numbers are cut in half if you separate out immigrant from “homegrown Black folk.” Harry thinks this is an important distinction in many cases since there typically are differences between these groups on various research measures.

Concerning gender, Harry believes that “being a male in management certainly has been an advantage over the years here and abroad.” Harry feels that we live in a male-dominated society, where things are probably more difficult for womyn. He mentions, however, that there is “some evidence that Black womyn have it easier” since the establishment is “more comfortable giving up power to womyn than to Black men.”

Harry says that he is fairly and equitably compensated “across the board,” although he points out that he works for a historically Black educational institution. He also believes he’s “right on par” with his counterparts at predominantly White institutions, in part because the university at which he works is part of a larger state system of schools. When asked about research indicating that femyles at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are typically paid significantly less, Harry says that is not something that he’s seen. While he acknowledges that pay differences exists, he believes educational discipline is a far greater factor, and points out that womyn are much more likely to be represented in the so-called softer disciplines.
Harry refers to the classic suit as “the business uniform” standard that has been required. He shared a saying from an industry friend of his that always travels in a suit that “Any position you have to face [as a Black person] always goes better with a suit and tie.” Harry says that highly successful Blacks are typically regarded as great dressers. He is concerned, however that the coming generation, the millennials, is challenged in this area. Instead of the laid back attire and “hairstyles that are radical beyond description” that he has seen from many in this age group, he cautions that a conservative approach is required if one intends to ascend to the highest levels. The goal, he adds, is to “reflect the corporate image.”

While he has largely made his own way by developing networking relationships with individuals he has met, Harry does speak of one serious mentor, who was a White male dean of a major hotel school. Just as he was mentored, Harry says he has provided mentorship for lots of others. He describes himself as “self-actualized at every age.” Harry reveals that he “didn’t really lay out [a] master plan and [does not] really recommend that for other people.” And, although he really has not sought out many opportunities, people have come to him with offers and positions he might pursue.

Harry believes that when companies hire people of color, they usually come out ahead because “most of us have been told you have to be twice as good to get twice as far,” and that typically results in over-preparation and/or over-qualification. This means that “most people of color at the highest levels bring added skills to the table because we want to be accepted in every way.”
Betty

The Wage Gap Manager

“I think that more than likely if I were male, that I would probably, most likely, just by statistics, be earning more.”

Betty is general manager at a large hotel in a major metropolitan area. Sxe is a light-skinned womyn, 50-54 years of age, who holds a bachelor’s degree and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. Betty sees the impact of race in the industry as significant and believes things are nowhere near where they need to be. Sxe maintains that Blacks have never really had a strong presence in the management ranks, but sxe has not been surprised by anything sxe has seen. “It’s what I expected,” sxe says. “You’re going to be treated differently” and there are “stereotypes that you’re going to have to overcome.” Betty believes that [Blacks] have to “work twice as hard,” but is glad that performance is increasingly measured by standardized metrics as that has taken some of the bias out of the process. Sxe also has found that relationships with a broad range of colleagues help mitigate the sort of “pre-presence of who you are and what you’re going to do,” internally, though interactions with guests can sometimes be more challenging.

While Betty does not know how her compensation compares with people inside her company, sxe has discovered that her peers with other companies in the city where sxe works earn more than sxe does. Sxe notes that, with one exception, they are all White males at similar sized properties, although some may not generate as much revenue as hers. The exception is actually a Black male at an independent property whose annual salary is equal to hers, though his unit probably generates about half the revenue that hers
does. Asked if sxe thinks things might be different if sxe were White and male, Betty replies,

I think that more than likely if I were male, that I would probably, most likely, just by statistics, be earning more….Statistically, if I put that in the mix and I see for different reasons I think that I would probably be earning somewhat more—maybe not significantly as these other companies, but within [my company] maybe slightly more.

Betty says that sxe has not been fast tracked in her career. Sxe has gone the long, hard way, and actually remembers one superior telling her to slow down and be patient at a time when sxe felt sxe had the experience and the expertise to successfully perform in upper management.

Betty has had great mentors in her life. While sxe still thinks it is most important for individuals who seek to get ahead to believe in themselves, sxe feels “the industry is starting to do [the right thing]. Sxe believes that good mentoring and a solid education can help Blacks get ahead at higher rates.

Perry

The Baller

“I make good money.” “I’m an African-American ex-football player…and people like to hang around ex-jocks.”

Perry is president of a very large hotel in a major metropolitan area. He is a dark-skinned man between 45 and 49 years old, who holds a bachelor’s degree and earns $250,000 or more annually.
Perry believes that his race has been “more of a help than a hindrance.” He thinks it has afforded him “positive exposure” because “the industry does not have a lot of African-American leaders.” Perry says he was “heavily recruited [out of college] because [he] was Black.” Also, at one point in his career, he ended up applying for a job at a company which had essentially received a legal mandate to hire a person of color.

Perry insists that he is not the kind of person to dwell on any negative impacts that race might have in the workplace and, therefore, admits that he “probably [has] missed a whole lot of cases where it does happen.” And while he does not detect any massively differential treatment in the workplace, he has noticed that “[He doesn’t] have the same relationship with [his] peers that they have with each other.” Perry says it is that social camaraderie that makes him feel more aware of his difference. He believes he is generally treated well, however, because “I’m an African-American, ex-football player—so a Black jock—and people like to hang around ex-jocks.”

There are some things that Perry feels he must be aware of in the workplace. He is “very cautious,” for example, with “how I dress, how I talk, and how I act.” Perry does not even wear blue blazers to work anymore because he got tired of people thinking that he was a security guard instead of an executive. When asked about the impact of gender on his career success, Perry says, “I think it’s tougher” for womyn in this “testosterone-driven, male-driven market.” In terms of compensation, Perry believes he has gotten better and more aggressive about asking for what he is worth. Even though he is pretty sure he not in the top 25% of his peers, things have improved because in the past, “I always felt I was making at the lower end of the spectrum than others.” And while Perry confesses “I made good money now,” his goal is to double his annual package at a larger
and more prestigious property. When asked about complexion, Perry says he is “on the
dark side” and quips, “I’m the guy that’s not supposed to be here!” He believes “it is
rare” for someone of his complexion to have gotten to this level and sees complexion as a
neutral to disadvantaging factor. On the topic of work attire, Perry explains that he “can’t
under-dress” nor can he be the guy that “over-dresses.” Thankfully, he is “a little bit old
school with” his fashion sense, and fitting in is not a problem.

Perry acknowledges that he was fast tracked “from the very beginning.” He believes
that he was “a minority leader that they wanted to move through the ranks.” Since Perry
feels he is “very good at what [he] does,” he believes that his racial difference was “icing
on the cake.” Perry says that he has “absolutely benefited from [mentors]” but “not one of
them was a person of color.” They were always either a White male or a White femyle,
and he never spoke with his mentors about being a person of color in the industry. Perry
does, however, try to be the mentor that other Black people need.

In terms of swelling the ranks of successful Black hospitality executives, Perry
believes that educational institutions are the best places to begin. He thinks that the
industry does not always attract the best Black minds. Perry maintains that young people
need to see people of color “in big roles,” and they need a better understanding of all of
the benefits of being in the hospitality industry.

Perry submits that “You can be a Black leader, or a great leader [who] happens to be
Black.” He sees more value in the latter. Perry also feels it is important for young Blacks
who want to move through the ranks to understand multiple areas of the business and
understand that they have to pay their dues. Additional keys to success in this business,
he adds, are good communication skills, good people skills, and not having a problem
with working. He maintains that the racial climate has improved in corporate America and a range of opportunities currently exist in the multilevel and advancement-intensive hotel sector, in particular.

Larry

The African-American Executive

“I’ve got a regular business role that I am responsible for, and then there’s all the other stuff that goes into being an African-American executive....I get a little extra for that—and I should.”

Larry is a senior vice president with a large international hotel corporation. He is a dark-skinned man aged 45-49 years, who holds both a bachelor’s degree and an MBA, and earns $250,000 or more a year. Larry says he does not think being Black has helped him. He believes there have been “some obstacles and impediments” and that his race has been a detriment in some instances and a non-issue in others. The only potential advantage Larry could think of is the fact that he works in a major urban center and his involvement in certain social and community organizations renders him fairly well connected and may make it easier for him to interact with major city and organizational leaders. Larry feels, however, that in many other contexts he might be second guessed while his White colleagues are given a pass. Since there may be times when he is “not getting a shot,” Larry’s strategy is to “outwork the competition to stay equal” and “fight to get ahead.”

Larry thinks he has gotten fast tracked because he has worked hard on the right things, placed his energy into high visibility projects whenever he could, and worked to ensure that his efforts have not gone unnoticed. Moreover, he has been careful not to
“screw [things] up” but “get [them] right” because “we don’t necessarily have the luxury of getting a second chance when coming up through the ranks.” Larry feels that even though he has been with his company for years and has reached a senior level, he still would not be given two or three chances to get something right. On the flip side, however, he can “look around and see [White] people of average productivity” who are still hanging around.

When asked about the impact of his gender on his success, Larry says one benefit is that he has not had to deal with the primary care of his children although this would probably have been expected of a womyn in his position. On the other hand, he believes that womyn are advantaged since they are the “chief beneficiaries of diversity supplier programs” and “all things being equal, a job would be given to a femyle over a male.”

Larry challenges the notion that $250,000 is a lot of money “because it isn’t. Five hundred isn’t a lot of money, ok?” He retorts that he makes “enough money now to work close to the people who really make a lot of money.” While he concedes that he is doing well, Larry believes more is possible as he has never been satisfied with where he is. From a compensation perspective, he says he knows what he makes relative to his peers. And while Larry’s salary is “probably appropriate” by comparison, he maintains [I’m] probably compensated more just because I have some additional responsibilities. But, you know, I should….I do more for the company. I’ve got a regular business role that I am responsible for, and then there’s all the other stuff that goes into being an African-American executive. You know, you live through a bunch of folks, you deal with external issues that are not part of the job program, you ensure that you got a good pipeline of young diverse talent that’s coming in, [and] you’re a
troubleshooter for the CEO on different issues. Well, you know what, that’s worth some money; and I get a little extra for that—and I should. So, yeah, I guess I am. I’m paid a little bit above my peers, but that’s okay.

Regarding work attire, Larry describes himself as “relatively conservative,” adding that it is not a burden because “It’s the way I’m made.” Although workplace standards fit his personality, Larry points out that “executives are expected to work, look, and behave in a certain way.”

While Larry does not necessarily feel that he has been fast tracked, he believes that mentorship has been “critical” to his career. In fact, he goes “a step above” and characterizes the assistance he has received as “sponsorship.” Larry insists that, “You don’t get to do what I been doing without somebody…sitting at the table saying…this guy deserves a shot and he can do it.”

In terms of increasing the ranks of Blacks in hospitality management, Larry suggests that people think long and hard about what they want, understand what it takes to be successful, and prepare themselves for the opportunity. He warns that “no one’s going to give you anything.” And he advises that different from simple networking, it is “genuine authentic relationships” and the production of “excellent results” that spurs advancement. Larry argues that because college graduates “gravitate toward finance, law, (and) anything other than this industry,” it is in hospitality managers’ best interests to go and get the talent they need. Finally, he points out that there are significant opportunities for ownership in the industry that have not been explored in the past.
Lenny

The Driven Manager

“I’m so driven that what I’ve done before...is the past. Moving forward is of extreme importance for me.”

Lenny is vice president and manager for a very large hotel. He is “probably in the dark-skinned group,” though he describes himself as the lightest of the dark and the darkest of the light. Lenny is a man between 45 and 49 years old, who has some college education, but does not possess a college degree, and he earns between $200,000 and $249,999 annually. Lenny states, “It’s just taken me longer to achieve based on the color of my skin than my counterparts.” He also has not been helped by the fact that he is not part of the White network. Lenny feels he has to be “twice as good as the next guy to prove” he deserves to be where he is. He believes that “not [all Black employees] will break through.” Lenny insists, “You’ve got to be different from all the rest.” He thinks this is partly because of some bigoted people in positions of power. And while he indicates that race is not a major issue for some, for others he believes racial differences and their corresponding prejudices matter a great deal. Lenny implies that working hard and producing solid results are not everything. Rather, the willingness of the power elite to recognize and promote excellence indiscriminately is also hugely important.

While Lenny feels that mentorship can be a positive thing, he cautions, “You have to be careful how you are portrayed in the sense of who you're aligning yourself with.” He shares the story of one of his former mentors being really helpful, but then leaving the company on bad terms, which resulted in everyone wondering about his loyalties. Lenny
also places a high value on having external mentors, who are not vested in his situation and can provide a more objective perspective.

Lenny feels that his degree of educational attainment is below average for his level in the industry and imagines it would be difficult for people “nowadays” to work their way up the way he has. He believes his wealth of experience across several areas of the industry is the one thing that has helped him continually achieve. Lenny feels that being Black has had “somewhat of a negative effect” on his level of career success because “people lump [all] Black men together…as being lazy or not up on their game, and things like that.” And while being male, in and of itself, has not been a problem for him, it is the “Black male” combination that has presented challenges. Lenny says “it comes down to how…you fit in with corporate America.” That is, “do you have the look, do you have the presence, the character, all that type of stuff.” Lenny talked about being in meetings where particular Black men have come up for discussion, and he has heard comments like, “Wow, they would be great if they didn't have braids or if they didn't do this or if they didn't do that, or if they didn't have a beard…” He believes a lot of the reluctance is “racially-driven.” And he maintains that far from happening “once or twice,” this kind of response is “the corporate way.”

While Lenny feels that he is fairly treated overall, he admits there have been situations where he felt uncomfortable and powerless. On one occasion, for example, when he was number three on the leadership team he was asked not to attend a meeting with a major client. Upon asking why, he was told the investor was “not great with diversity” and “it just wouldn’t sit well.” And when the differential treatment has not been overt, Lenny says it is “the undertones of conversation” that clue him in to the fact
that things are not the same as they would be for others. After describing himself as the lightest of the dark, Lenny reveals that he has been in situations where “a dark-skinned brother” was not given an opportunity because “the look” is really important to corporate America. “To me, if you’re lighter” remarks Lenny, “I think you have a better chance of getting ahead,” but “if you’re dark, you’re (perceived as) not as smart.”

Regarding work attire, Lenny discloses that early in his career one of his bosses sat him down and explained that although he was doing a great job, he would never get ahead because of the casual way he was dressing. So, Lenny took this White male’s advice and changed his attire, which he thinks has been helpful.

In general, Lenny says he has had two types of mentors: (1) White senior vice president types in their mid- to early 50’s and (2) African-Americans, who are in his same age group. He adds that his mentors have been mostly male, and the people he picks are those that will give him the honest answers about how he should approach things as a Black man in this industry. Lenny maintains the main reason his mentors have been mainly male is because the businesses he has worked for have been White male dominated.

Lenny feels that he has definitely been fast tracked two or three times in his career, although there have been times when he has received essentially no help and has had to go it alone. In one instance, for example, his boss told him he was going to hold him in his position, rather than allowing a promotion, because he was really good and he needed him there.

Lenny shares that there is much more he wants to achieve. “I’m so driven that what I’ve done before…is the past. Moving forward is of extreme importance for me.” When
asked about his high level of attainment and monetary success, Lenny replies, “It’s not enough for my drive and what I want to accomplish.” Since he feels that, “[There’re] not enough African-Americans in high-paying and high-powered positions,” Lenny constantly considers “Who can I set up and do this well so that the next…Black man or Black womyn gets that opportunity also?” He states,

I have an important role in the sense of everybody who comes behind me, and I feel the pressure of that all the time. And, I can’t fail....So, it’s a lot for me, but it’s also a lot for…my people—African-Americans.

Lenny refuses to believe there is not enough Black talent for some of the really big positions. Instead, he argues both that the industry does not look hard enough and that some talented Blacks who entered the industry “give up before they reach this point.”

Lenny thinks “a lot of African-Americans give up” because this is “an industry that bleeds you dry.” He explains that this is not a racial thing, it is just the nature of the industry that, even at this level, he may get called at midnight five nights a week.

In order to demonstrably increase the number of Blacks in upper management positions, Lenny feels that companies really have to understand mentorship in order for it to be effective. He submits that “true mentorship” is what is needed. Lenny explains that rather than merely matching one person up with another, mentors should do things like have lunch once a month with their mentees and take their phone calls no matter what is happening.

While Lenny concedes that opportunities for Blacks are probably better than ever, he believes it has been “forced growth” rather than a product of people wanting to do the right thing. He feels that successful Blacks “have to take some personal responsibility as
leaders.” Lenny also believes there must be more personal responsibility on the part of young Blacks. One of the things that drives him crazy, he says, is people who think that success is owed to them or believe that because you are also Black, you should simply give them a particular position “to help them out.” He admonishes, “You’re entitled to nothing, but you can go out and get the things that you want.”

Finally, Lenny shares a recent story about having to go to two or three luxury car dealers before finding someone “who really [wanted] to help me.” His point was that racism, “unfortunately, [is] still there,” “people don’t necessarily give you the amount of respect you deserve,” and “[discrimination] doesn’t go away with money.”

Barry

The Individual Manager

“We’re always defined by our lowest common denominator” and are “never just looked at as individuals doing our job.” What is needed is for someone “to understand that my name is Barry, not African-American Barry.”

Barry is a vice president for a second tier city convention and visitors bureau. He is a dark-skinned man 40-44 years of age, who holds both a bachelor’s and an MBA, and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. Barry feels that race has had a significant impact on his degree of career success. He says back in the 80’s when he was in a management trainee program for an upscale hotel chain he was regularly reminded that he was the only Black person west of the Mississippi River in such a position. Although he believes “a lot of folks worried about being a token,” Barry knew it was in the company’s best interest to have him, and he felt that he “came along at the right time.” Barry says that in the late 80’s and early 90’s inquiries from the National Coalition of
Black Meeting Planners (NCBMP) about Black representation resulted in a wave of hires at city-level CVBs. So, “color [has] had a lot to do with” some of the positions that he has held.

At the same time, Barry submits, there were “absolutely places where [race] held me back.” He cites an old hotel industry motto, for example, that, “You never put anyone up front who didn’t look like your customers.” Barry points out that even today, “you can count on one hand the number of Black CEOs of convention and visitors bureaus.” “I think it’s a comfort level for folks,” he says. Barry recounts that in the 80’s and early 90’s, “you had to be 10 times better than a White guy if you wanted to get the job.” He characterizes a lot of things he has heard during his career as “stereotypical,” “bothersome,” and “hurdles” to overcome. Barry says, he “still believe[s] that mentality is within some of the folks making the decisions” today. And while “the numbers are certainly not what we’d like them to be,” “at least we can say there are four or five [Blacks].”

Regarding the reality of gender, Barry feels womyn dominate CVBs at the entry and middle levels, but men are in charge at the upper level. He points out that the CEOs in all of the major hubs tend to be men. Concerning pay, Barry believes he is paid “pretty darn well” for the city in which he lives and his level of responsibility. He feels that he has “probably set the bar” in his position and knows for a fact that he earns significantly more than his predecessor. In terms of treatment, things are basically fine internally, though, externally, “they’re still some folks that come to my town and are surprised I’m [in this position].”
Barry says that there have been issues and assumptions because of his dark complexion. In the 80’s he thinks he was sometimes seen as “the big dark-skinned African” or it was assumed that he played basketball or was in the military. He remarks there is not much one can do with these types of stereotypical attitudes, but do one’s job. In the last 10 years or so, Barry does not feel that his skin color has had as much of an impact on his experiences. Although he fears he’s “always going to be viewed as the athlete or [hypersexual],” he is grateful that things are not nearly at the level they have been in the past.

While racism has been an unfortunate part of the reality for his generation, Barry is concerned that the younger generation does not really see it at all. He’s also concerned that the next generation “doesn’t want to service folks….They want no part of hotel work….They want to be event planners.” Barry worries that this different mindset will keep lots of Black youth from going into many traditional hospitality areas altogether. He says he has seen a lot of young people come and go in this industry. He does not think they understand that this is an industry in which you have to “earn your stripes.”

In terms of strengthening the presence of Blacks in higher positions in the industry, Barry believes that addressing the level of education and certifications that people have will encourage growth. Barry also feels an important step for the industry to take is not to pigeon-hole people into race work, but give them “more diversified job experiences.” And in the CVB sector, Barry says destinations have to be more open-minded in their hiring and understand that an African-American is just as capable as a White person. Importantly, Barry believes, “You gotta be given the opportunity.” Another one of his big concerns is that “We’re always defined by our lowest common denominator” and are
“never just looked at as individuals doing our job.” Barry feels that this is just a part of the larger framework in which the industry operates, and he thinks what is needed is for someone “to understand that [his] name is Barry, not African-American Barry.”

Patty

The Comfortable Director

“I’m not a nine-to-five person. I’ve never wanted to open my own business. I’m not a risk taker. I wanna be very safe. I’m alright with being number two. I’m not ambitious.”

Patty is a director with a national non-profit that builds bridges between corporate America and minority-owned ventures. Sxe is a “light brown skinned” womyn 55-59 years of age, who holds a bachelor’s degree and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. Patty’s day-to-day activities revolve around meeting planning and conference coordination. Her industry experience spans nearly four decades, and one of her central goals at this point is to “try to get more people of color in the industry.”

Having worked almost exclusively in Black or minority contexts, Patty characterizes the environment at a former relatively autonomous part-time job as “an old White girls’ network.” Rather than calling her coworkers out for anything specific or conscious, Patty explains that simply being who they were made things difficult for her. While sxe tried to explain it in terms of uncomfortable interjections and “very subtle little things that they do to try to show that I’m better than you, I know more than you,” sxe says you had to be there to see it.

It’s what they do all the time….I think it’s inherent in they’re make up. I think they can’t help it. And I think if you told them, they would be hurt. That’s my
experience with White people….I got White friends and if you tell them “That’s offensive” or “You’re doing something,” they would be very, very hurt ‘cause they don’t see it like that. Just like when you go in the store, they act like they can’t see you. They’ll step on you, push you. “I’m not invisible. Do you need my glasses? As big as I am, you can’t see me?”….It’s like, “Get out the way.” You’re supposed to move out of their way, that kind of thing. But they don’t see it like that. They’re just doing what it is they do. They are the masters of the universe. And I’m not saying it’s every single one of ‘em, but that has been my experience, period—especially in the business world. It’s why you here? Why you in first class? How you get here? You not an entertainer or athlete. You go to a five star resort. “What do you do for a living?,” “Well, how you here?,” or “Bring me some ice.” How many parties you go to, receptions, and people ask you, or you’re in the store, “Can you help me?” “Do I look like I work here?” Or “bring me another drink” or somethin’.

Despite past problems, Patty admits that “A lot of White people have helped me. As a matter of fact, mostly White people have helped me. A lot of Black people won’t help you. They think it takes something away from them. And we have to get out of that. We have to help each other.”

While sxe is not hypersensitive, Patty notes,

I’m aware that I am a Black womyn in this world….You know that’s like you walk down the street at night, you don’t go [humming mindlessly]. You’re like aware of your surroundings, so if something comes at you, you not really 100% surprised.
The caliber of this awareness, however, is different than that previously discussed by many others who work in predominantly White contexts. Patty says sxe was taught and believes that

As a Black person, you have to be twice as good; you have to better. Just doing your job is not good enough….because somebody’s going to take away some of that from you….If I go for a job and a White womyn goes for a job, I better have certifications, better education, [and] better experience. I better have everything twice as much as sxe has because sxe’s going to get it nine times out of 10. I have to have something heads and shoulders above.

Patty is seasoned, efficient, and comfortable in her position—so comfortable, in fact, that sxe topped off her business casual outfit with no shoes for the full length of our interview and a generous dose of African-American Vernacular English! Sxe has some interesting attitudes about the workplace and the work itself. Patty remarks, for example, “I love my job—they pay me well,” and sxe makes it clear that sxe is “dedicated to [her] paycheck.” And, although sxe has been called a “lazy thinker” in the past, Patty is very clear about what sxe is and is not. Sxe reveals,

I’m not a nine-to-five person. I’ve never wanted to open my own business. I’m not a risk taker. I wanna be very safe. I’m alright with being number two. I’m not ambitious…. I’m not an easy person to talk to and get along with.

Patty also explains, “I’ve never really worked for White folks. I don’t think I can. They tell me it’s different.” After initially responding that race has not had an impact on her career success, Patty concedes that being Black has given her a level of recognition and status that sxe might not receive otherwise. Sxe explains that sxe is on a couple of
mainstream industry boards largely because sxe is one of only a few Black representatives.

Patty sees skin tone as an ongoing problem. Sxe believes the brownbag test is effectively still in play in many instances. Patty also feels that being dark-skinned is seen as “threatening,” and “the more you look like the powers that be…” the better. Sxe submits, moreover, that most highly successful Blacks are not “blue black” (an African-American idiom for an exceedingly dark skin tone). Patty also indicates that issues of body weight and hair length are also potentially problematic for Black femyles trying to move up the corporate ranks.

Patty is the only participant who expresses that, “I get paid a lot for what I do.” When pressed for a rationale, Patty says sxe believes it is because sxe has “exceeded a lot.” So, while sxe ascribes a portion of her high pay to talent, sxe also knows that a significant part is a simple matter of longevity and standard annual salary increases. Regarding continued career progression, Patty explains,

I’m not gonna ever get a promotion. There’s no other job….There’s nowhere to go ‘cause it’s a one person…my secretary and clerk, department….I could have called myself vice president….I don’t care! Pay me! Call me janitor! Give me my money! Title doesn’t matter to me.

The only realistic change Patty can hope for is doing the same kind of work for another company, where sxe likely will not be paid as much. Patty is familiar with surveys and studies in her field and feels that her pay exceeds the average. If anything were to ever happen with her present job, sxe says sxe might be willing to go elsewhere
for up to 40 or 50 thousand less than sxe currently makes, though sxe would most likely just retire.

The notion of awareness of one’s race or color is not a major concern for Patty in her current workplace. “No…it doesn’t matter here,” sxe remarks. Because Blacks make up the largest racial or ethnic group at her job, sxe is very comfortable in the workplace and does not stress about things like how sxe talks, dresses, or acts. While a predominantly minority work environment has shielded Patty from many of the typical concerns expressed by Black professionals who work mainly with Whites, Patty has encountered some attitudes on the part of Whites that sxe does not appreciate. When working externally to negotiate contracts, for example, sxe observes “They act like you stupid or you supposed to be stupid, or you can’t be as smart as you are or know as much as you do.” Patty accuses some of the young White professionals sxe has worked with, in particular, of having an “instant mindset” that minority means “less than…not as good as….That you not gon’ spell everything correct or use bad grammar or somethin’, or that they can shit you.”

In the 70’s when Patty first started out in the business, interactions with Whites were rather complex. When I was younger and went to a lot of professional association events, there would

Be 1,500 people, like six Black people. Like when you had dinner, you’d have to say you were going to the bathroom before dessert and not come back. ‘Cause then they wanna dance and hug on you and all. You just had to, just “Oh, excuse me I gotta go to the ladies’ room” and just don’t come back. And they were older White men. And it was a whole lot of game playin’ goin’ on and stuff. You were
Black, you had to be easy. I don’t see none of that anymore. But…that bothered me in the beginning. Then I had to stop going to [a major conference in my field] because, but they’ve changed their program now. ‘Cause you would go away for five days, and if you didn’t deep sea fish or golf, you go to a few sessions, there was nothin’ else for you to do….They keep coming up with these multicultural things and diversity, but they still don’t get it right.

Patty says that only two White people work in her office.

Susan’s like Black…Seriously. Sxe tell you to herself….I’ve seen her stand up for Black people where Black people wouldn’t stand up for themselves. Sxe was living with a guy for like 25 years until he died—Black guy. So, sxe’s Black. Sxe lives [at an address in a predominantly Black area of the city]. I wouldn’t live up there. And when we go get a cab, they won’t stop for me. So (when) we together, sxe has to raise her hand to get a cab. And then they be surprised, sxe go to [a well known Black community]. I’m like “Susan I couldn’t live up there,” and sxe been up there 40 years.

Concerning the other White colleague, Patty surmises, “Sxe’s not as liberated.” When asked whether sxe feels any differently than sxe might around other coworkers, Patty replies,

[No] ‘cause they be using the n-word in front of them and everything. They act like they Black. They act like they don’t see that they’re different color. They know that they are. But I’m just saying, they forget. We forget sometime since other people are minority. Like the guy across there…he uses the word “nigger” all the time. “You my nigga.” And he doesn’t understand. I’m like, “what if we
said ‘spick’ to you? You can’t.” But he says, “But I don’t mean nothin’; that’s just the way we talk.” “No, nigga,” [and] he talk loud, and he big, like six foot six and 350 pound. You can’t, you offending people. He doesn’t see it like that….We have a certain level of freedom here that nobody else would have and nobody else would put up with. That’s why I said it’d be real hard for me to go somewhere else. ‘Cause we be ‘round here cursing and carrying on and saying things that nobody else would put up with. And it’s just different. That’s all I can say.

When asked about excellence, Patty references a saying sxe used to keep on her office wall that read, in part, “Autograph your work with excellence.” Sxe discusses how some of the people who have reported to her in the past, have given her sloppy work. After being called out by a superior for shoddy work initiated by one of her subordinates, Patty says,

I never give my boss something I didn’t look at three times….I micromanage if I feel I have to [but] I don’t let nobody else bet my job. I’m not going to lose my good job on somebody else’s nonsense. So I’m responsible…I don’t never say my secretary did that. I’m responsible; I’ll fix it.

Patty knows that sxe has it good. While sxe doesn’t have to worry about what sxe wears and how sxe speaks, and sxe can “come and go” with some flexibility, sxe believes that people in positions of power

Put up with your stuff if you’re good. ‘Cause, see, they don’t wanna make you mad….Like my convention, we net like a million, seven. They ain’t kickin’ me out the door. You understand what I’m sayin’? So as long as I keep bringing them in that money, I’m good to go. The minute that I don’t, I know what time of day it
is. And you have to have something that people want; that’s the only reason they keep you….If you stop producin’, they don’t care how good you were. And you can’t ever get complacent or rest on your laurels. You still gotta do.

Patty has had a fulfilling career and is grateful that “I’ve never had the sense that I had to watch my back.” But when it comes to the world of business as a whole, sxe mocks the supposed truism that “cream rises to the top,” remarking that “so does shit.” Patty’s point is that things are not always fair, and everyone who is on top is not necessarily excellent.

Patty reveals that sxe does not have mentors per se. Although there are a few people sxe feels sxe can reach out to and ask questions, sxe says sxe has really only had one mentor, who happens to be a Black male. Patty spoke quite a bit, however, about reaching back and mentoring those who are coming behind her. Sxe enjoys mentoring, in part, because “you learn from them, too.” Patty suspects that “work ethic” is an issue for some, and sxe insists that, “You have to do what needs to be done.” And in the words of her grandmother, sxe admonishes, “Nothing comes to a sleeper but a dream,” and people should expect to put in a “fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay.”

Tammy

The Total Compensation Manager

“Almost 50% of my additional salary comes from other places. And what matters to me is what I bring home and that’s significant compared to what my base is.”

Tammy is general manager for a very large hotel in a major metropolitan area. Sxe is a darker-skinned womyn 40-44 years old, who holds an associate’s degree and earns $150,000 to $199,999 annually. Born on the east coast and reared partially in the west, Tammy worked her way up through the ranks and sees her level of educational
attainment as “equal to or below” most general managers. Emphasizing the intensity of her on-the-job preparation, Tammy jokes, “I don’t even know who raised my last child!”

While highlighting her fearless spirit and an inexorable commitment to exceptional results, Tammy admits sxe probably ascended departmental ranks faster than some because sxe had a mentor who “recognized [her] skills, ability, and work ethic.” This White male possessed more power and authority, “helped navigate [her] career choices,” and encouraged her to take chances. Tammy characterizes his support as “extremely important” to her career progression and views it as critical coaching and sponsorship, rather than mere mentorship. Clearly distinguishing the concepts, Tammy remarks, “Mentorship to me says, ‘This is the way I’ve done it. You work hard, you work fast; you can do it just like me.’” Alternatively, sxe defines sponsorship as “those senior leaders that see you.” “They sit at the tables where you’re not there often and they’re able to know what you’ve done and… bring your name to the table where you wouldn’t know that’s happening.” And Tammy believes coaching occurs when “folks that can help you know who you are [and] what is most important to you… sort of walk you through forwarding action that you know needs to happen for you to attain the level or achieve the position you want.” Sxe views advocates like her own mentor as critical since corporate America, in general, is not likely to “see the good in you no matter who you are based on your race, creed, color, [or] sexual orientation.” “It’s just not that way,” sxe laments.

Based in the heart of a predominantly Black urban area, Tammy describes the current environment in which sxe works as “encouraging and inspiring” since sxe is able “to see people that look like” her. Sxe recalls less comfortable times in her career when sxe was “the only one.” Tammy discusses the dramatic turnaround across several key metrics that
her current property has experienced, and sxe ties the results in large part to “having a leader that looks like them.” Prior to her arrival, sxe explains, employees commonly referred to her hotel as “the plantation.”

While the property itself has moved in the right direction and sxe is happy overall, Tammy says the thing that bothers her most is when customers and meeting planners, in particular, have difficulty believing sxe is the general manager with ultimate onsite authority and attempt to “talk around” her. Tammy refers to such occurrences as “isolated perspective(s) of…very shallow and ignorant person[s]”. To this categorization, sxe adds a higher level official in the company sxe briefly interacted with some years ago when sxe wore her hair in neat and attractive braids that told her sxe would never be able to progress because of her appearance. Tammy, however, is careful not to go overboard in her dress and tends to stick with “blacks, browns, and blues” because sxe believes one has to fit in and dress the part.

In response to the salary question, Tammy pressed the point that her total compensation is much more significant since sxe regularly doubles her annual income when cash equivalent remuneration such as stocks and bonuses are included. Sxe clearly distinguishes her annual “compensation” from her “salary” because although sxe is salaried at $150,000-$199,999, “my total compensation, like what I would put on a W2, would be about $350,000, $400,000.” “So, almost 50% of my additional salary comes from other places. And what matters to me is what I bring home and that’s significant compared to what my base is.” And not only does sxe believe sxe is fairly compensated, interestingly, but her company performs an annual review to assure that despite differences like race and gender, associates in similar positions are receiving comparable
compensation. The point of this yearly assessment, as well as a bi-annual humyn capital review at the property level, is to “bullet proof” the organization’s practices and help make sure things are fair.

As a darker-skinned and larger in height and girth womyn, Tammy is aware of issues like racism and sexism, but feels there are “more people in positions [now] that can shoot…down” discrimination to help ensure that bigotry is confronted and the system operates fairly. While sxe is aware that problems remain, sxe is happy that discrimination for the most part is no longer overt.

One important consideration that Tammy adds to our conversation is that womyn across race and more so than men, “sometimes…feel like we have to know everything before we take the next opportunity.” Sxe maintains that womyn must be encouraged to take more chances and pursue calculated risks.

Asked whether the notion that Blacks have to work twice as hard rings true to her experience, Tammy retorts, “I’ve felt that since I’ve been a little girl.” Sxe talks about her upbringing under the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam before converting back to Christianity and how constant vigilance in and awareness of the White environment in which we live made her who sxe is. Sxe says sxe has always understood that the expectation for her was excellence even if White counterparts were able to slack or put in an average performance. The message sxe received early on was, “Don’t try that trick!”

Finally, Tammy feels that more time and energy needs to be expended to help Blacks understand what is possible in the hospitality industry. Sxe is afraid that all people hear about is housekeeping, bellhop, front desk and other basic line positions. Tammy speaks
proudly about the fact that her son graduated recently from a top HBCU and turned down offers with well know fortune 500 companies to accept a $65,000 starting position with the international hotel company for which sxe works. Sxe believes that if this kind of message were better disseminated more talented Black youth would choose hospitality.

As a manager Tammy talks about some of the creative ways that sxe has encouraged and rewarded extremely talented millennials. Because sxe deals with a few at home, sxe feels sxe understands their desire to rapidly make a name for themselves and begin moving up the corporate ladder. Recently, for example, sxe used the innovative title of “Director of Green” to elevate and encourage one young employee who was gung ho about environmental improvements at the property level.

Tommy

The Discriminated Manager

“One of the things I try to do is not get stuck in this victim land.” “‘Look, I’m fine. If you’re wondering whether I’m going to do something crazy, no, I’m over it. I’m done.

This happens to be—this is my world, this is the world I live in. So no, I’m not surprised.’”

Tommy is area general manager for six hotels in a major metropolitan area. He is a darker-skinned man between 45 and 49 years of age, who holds a bachelor’s degree and earns $150,000 to $199,999 annually. While Tommy has day-to-day operational responsibility for one of the properties, his main function regarding the additional hotels is to leverage revenue opportunities. He has more than 20 years of experience in the hotel business, and his entrée into the industry was from the finance/accounting side.
Tommy discusses the impact of race in his early industry experience in the context of being one of very few Blacks. He spoke about attending large business gatherings and being one of three Blacks out of a group of 300, for example. Tommy explains that feelings of awkwardness regarding race were much more common when dealing with external constituents. He remembers sitting at tables during hotel deals and always “feel[ing] the hesitation” of owners surprised and/or concerned that a Black man was calling the shots financially.

Tommy explains that because Blacks were traditionally employed in such hotel areas as housekeeping and human resources, “external players” always exuded a level of discomfort with his presence. He says “it still happens today” though “not so much” in the predominantly Black city in which he works. Tommy says anytime he walks in a room, even when interacting with people in his own corporation, there is “a big ‘wow’—even in [his current city].”

Tommy believes challenges with skin tone can be fairly broad and expresses that “This can be a very discriminating business…Clearly there’s an image; there’s a look….I’m moderately handsome, but I’m clearly Black.” Tommy recalls asking a superior about going to the Middle East, for example, and being told to “forget it. You would not be well received.” On another occasion while vacationing in Barbados and casually expressing an interest in working there, he was indirectly told it would not be a good idea. “I’m not sure islanders would respond well to you as an African-American male. We found that they respond better to Caucasians.” While describing himself as on the cusp between light and dark, Tommy says, “During the summer months, I would fail the brown bag test” and “I’m on the darker side of the cusp.”
Also regarding race, Tommy expresses challenges with interacting internally. He talks about being in a “mixed audience” with senior level people and consciously wanting to sound “smart” and be “engaged” but then seeing another Black person who is “step and fetching.” His experience is that White people appreciate and gravitate toward the latter while there is “clear discomfort with me speaking intellectually.” Because there have been these times “when they’re really unhappy with me,” Tommy feels like the message is that his “role is just to try to be fun” and people are not interested in his intellectual opinion on things.

Moreover, Tommy submits that there is “no question” that things are different for Black males in the corporate context than they are for Black femyles. And although he tries “not to get stuck in this victim land,” he is pretty intuitive and can see from the chemistry and dynamics in a room, during a reception, for example, that White coworkers flock to the Black womyn while he has to “go out of [his] way to create the networking experience.”

While Tommy is not completely sure why this is the case, he believes part of the problem is stereotypes about Black men being lazy. He shares a story about a White male superior expressing concern about his chances for securing a promotion because he considered Tommy “laid back.” Although Tommy’s on-the-job performance and results were objectively stellar, there was still this unhelpful perception. Tommy says this incident convinced him to “tweak my behavior and show them a little more emotion and candor around how I feel.” He explains that it is not as if he has not been conscious of his environment before acting in the past. Tommy insists, in fact, “I obsess over my own self-development and I am critically critical of myself.”
Concerning whether he has ever been fast tracked, Tommy replies there were “times early in my career where I definitely felt fast tracked.” He says he became a hotel executive committee member in 3 ½ years. Tommy attributes the rapid progression to being “a diverse candidate.” “It’s good for the numbers and I do a pretty good job,” he says. In other incidences, however, he believes he has been denied opportunities even though he “[ran] circles around [the people]” who were given the opportunities.

Tommy shared a story about interviewing for a position in South Beach and being told by multiple superiors that he was the “number one candidate” as he had “hit the ball out of the park” during the preliminary screening process. Although he had already forwarded his resume and spoken to some of the people involved, when he traveled to South Beach for a face-to-face meeting, the interview with the Latino manager with whom he met lasted a mere five minutes. “I don’t even think he extended his hand to shake mine,” Tommy reveals. He remembers being asked some “nonsensical questions” that did not pertain to job performance, and he believes the interviewer did not realize he was Black and had a problem with it. After leaving the interview and reporting to administrators that he did not feel good about the interview vibe, he was ultimately told the property was “looking for somebody with a little more experience with boutique hotels.”

Tommy was frustrated, in part, because “I try to strategically put a few things on my resume to avoid that shit.” He says that everybody in administration got nervous and seemed less worried about him personally than about what he might do. Tommy says he was not as pissed off that it happened as he was concerned that the company seemed intent on sweeping the situation under the rug. Regarding the incidence of discrimination
itself, he remarked to company officials, “‘Look, I’m fine. If you’re wondering whether I’m going to do something crazy, no, I’m over it. I’m done. This happens to be – this is my world, this is the world I live in. So no, I’m not surprised.’”

Tommy shared some very interesting thoughts on attire. When he initially entered the industry, he says white shirts and dark suits were the universal expectation and then blue shirts became okay. Tommy comments that he has always been pretty fashionable and the kind of person who might get a “Wow” or “You’re really sharp today.” But it was not until a White coworker greeted him with the phrase “What’s up, slick?” that he began to feel he “wasn’t wearing the right uniform.” Since it suddenly became “clear to [him] that [he] look[ed] different than anyone else,” he decided to tone down his attire. And while he thinks industry attire has opened up a bit, he believes there is still a “basic premise of gray, blue, and maybe some khaki in the summer,” if there was a big meeting which included the higher ups, “I wouldn’t be caught with anything other than a white or blue shirt.” These, he explains, are the “unspoken rules.”

Regarding unspoken rules, Tommy related the story of a White coworker who was upset about applying for a position that went to another White colleague who “[didn’t] even wear t-shirts under his shirts!” In the midst of his anger, the friend had not noticed that Tommy did not wear t-shirts either. But Tommy began looking around and realized these t-shirts were the norm. He made a “note to self” to “go get some white t-shirts” to be in keeping. And although he now sees wearing a dress shirt without a white t-shirt as “equivalent to a womyn wearing a blouse without a bra,” he reiterates that these are the kind of unspoken rules that no one tells you but you need to know to move forward.
Tommy views facial hair and body weight as related additional examples. While he explains that beards are allowed if one has a medical condition or religious reasons and the entire policy is actually under review, he believes it is best not to have them at all. Although Tommy concedes that “you stumble across them,” it is clear that he does not have one and does not recommend it for others who want to continually progress. In the same vein, he once counseled a promising Black male coworker to lose some weight if he wanted to grow with the company. While there was no official rule regarding weight, his message was that these are unspoken understandings that can limit one’s development.

In response to a question about family, Tommy states, “The white picket fence is not critically important anymore.” He mentions, in fact, that there are a number of openly gay senior and upper management staff members. Tommy thinks being gay may actually be less of an issue than being Black in today’s industry.

Another interesting point Tommy raises is that while things have changed, Whites “really don’t understand our struggles.” “As much as we have a lot of initiatives around inclusion and diversity,” he comments, “what I don’t think they realize is…many of us have come from very tough beginnings.” “The fact that I’m now a six-figure nigga doesn’t mean that’s from whence I come.” Tommy posits that there is a widespread desire among successful Blacks to stay connected to our communities.

Also, although Blacks are widely accepted in the halls of management, Tommy argues that most are well received because they are seen as some kind of an exception to a limitedly educated and poorly spoken Black rule. He believes, “There’s still a cultural misunderstanding” which results in many Blacks acting differently around Whites as a matter of survival. “If it’s just [us]….We’re going to cut up a little bit [and]
there’s going to be some slang. We have a tendency to not let that be exposed when we talk to others.”

To the question of mentorship, Tommy responds that he had a very bad experience with an internal mentoring system when he was matched with a senior vice president in his company in the mid 90’s. He refers to the experience as “the most worthless, superficial, non-authentic….It was a joke.” “It was so distant and so….It was a waste of time.” Tommy says it was “a formalized program that just didn’t work.” In fact, the kind of feedback “they were getting from non people of color is, ‘Oh, must be nice. Boy, I’d love to have a mentor too at a senior level,’ and so they disbanded it.”

Tommy suggests that there was more effective mentoring among Blacks themselves. And although he had a particularly negative formalized mentoring experience, Tommy shares that there are about three senior individuals who he feels support him and interject good vibes whenever his name comes up in executive conversations to which he is not privy. He considers himself very fortunate that these White males have helped smooth the way for his successful progression in the organization. And in the last three years or so a few senior femyles, both White and Black, have become real allies as the corporate landscape has become more diverse.
Danny
The Southern Strategy Officer

“The rules of what we [were] taught as a Southerner [were that] you’ve got to be twice as good. And so you must resolve yourself to that reality and engage in this world, understanding that that’s what you’ve got to do.” “You can either view it as being unfair or you can view it as creating a competitive advantage for [yourself] simply through the misgivings of others.”

Danny holds a vice president plus title at a large gaming company. After initially proclaiming, “I'm [a] black cherry, dark-brown brother,” Danny describes himself as “brown-skinned….not light brown-skinned [but] just a brown-skinned black dude.” He is 50-54 years old, he holds a bachelor’s degree, and he earns $250,000 or more annually.

Danny describes himself fundamentally as a Southerner. He considers himself fortunate since he has been around long enough to have had a completely segregated early childhood. Danny describes his business perspective and worldview as “fairly progressive” and employs a “social approach” to daily life and ongoing improvement in the workplace.

Concerning the effects of racial identity in the workplace, Danny states,

My ability to manage the topic of race has had tremendous impacts on my career [and] my ability to manage it….Diversity simply is [the] desirability to manage whatever those dimensions of [difference] might be that impact how well ultimately we do in our careers….When I started…, there were still a lot of old heads who were running the business who did not have issues with subconscious preference….They literally were of the opinion, consciously, that [African-
Americans were either less competent or totally incompetent until they proved their competence.

“When [Whites] were looking at [other] majority colleagues, especially majority males,” Danny submits,

They figured those folks to be competent until they proved otherwise….The rules of what we [were] taught as [Southerners were that] you've got to be twice as good. And so, you must resolve yourself to that reality and engage in this world, understanding that that's what you've got to do. And, if you think about it, you can either view it as being unfair or you can view it as creating a competitive advantage for you simply through the misgivings of others.

Danny maintains that those who viewed this differential treatment as a potential advantage moved forward, and those who considered it an inherent disadvantage did not do well.

One of Danny’s suggestions for effective advancement is to secure a career path with a real trajectory by developing a degree of specialty but combining that with a flexibility and willingness to move into other areas of growth.

Danny powerfully asserts that broad categories of difference affect individuals’ levels of success. He sees diversity as increasingly important since today’s businesses operate in “a terribly global environment.” And even as his own company expands its influence internationally, Danny believes “there's a certain capacity that [he and other leaders] have to exhibit and be able to leverage to be the operator chosen to do business.” He considers this competence critical in effectively managing companies in jurisdictions with markedly different cultural and business approaches than we have domestically.
Danny plainly states that his beginnings as a Black person in the hospitality industry were characterized by disparate treatment and unequal expectations. Although he points out that there can be positive benefits for discriminated persons who appropriately adjust their perspectives, Danny implies that the “conscious preference” of yesterday and today’s “subconscious preference” have real, unequal, and negative impacts on the careers and lived experiences of Black hospitality managers.

Danny carps that perceptual unfairness is not simply a matter of prejudice against Blacks without a demonstrated track record.

Very often, even when you've been extremely successful in a particular work area on a particular job or engaging around a particular project, rather than viewing you relative to maintaining your performance at a high level, which we all have to do in whatever endeavors we have, very often the question would come back when there was a new opportunity that you might engage around was whether or not you had the mental capacity to do that new thing, not whether or not you'd already proven that you did. Now the question is not whether or not you would maintain a high level of performance, but whether or not you had the capacity at all to engage in anything.

Danny explains that such irrational treatment is exasperating to hardworking and high achieving Black professionals.

The frustration comes when you know you've proven in a number of situations previously that you have gray matter and business acumen, etc. if you'll engage at a high level. But yet, you come to another project, and it may not even be as complicated as a couple you've done before, and you've got to prove yourself
again. I think that within a construct of business, that also is not quite as prevalent as it was before, but…I’m finding young people with MBA’s who are coming out of the best schools [are] still having to deal with that as well.

While Danny is clear that there are many particularized challenges that Black professionals face in today’s hospitality organizations, he states that some “don't understand that you have corporate politics that you have to deal with no matter who you are, whether you're a majority person or a minority person, male or femyle.”

The thing that can cause a minority professional a lot of angst and a lot of uncertainty is they're trying to figure [out] whether this is corporate politics that I'm dealing with, whether it's racism, or the thing that runs you crazy, whether it's a mixture of the two. Because, when it's a mixture of the two, you're confused. You have no idea of exactly how you ought to deal with it. It takes you off your game in total.

Danny’s comments here demonstrate the different, and arguably additional, challenges that minority managers face in corporate contexts.

Danny offers a well-balanced view of today’s corporate reality. “Within the construct of what you do as a professional, you have all these things that have to be dealt with,” he advises.

Now, at the same time, within your organization, you will find centers of excellence when it comes to certain people having the capability to engage across a wide range of talent, and maximize that talent. And then, in other sectors, you have literally a snuffing out of talent because people view the talent through a particular lens.
While he feels that corporations must be fairer in dealing with people from different racial and cultural backgrounds, Danny cautions, “If we talk about talent, purely from the standpoint of identity, then we miss what's important to address in our organizations.” He contends that “Talent has to be viewed from the standpoint of what it yields,” and his foundational question is “What benefits do you get specific to the organization relative to the talent that you bring on?” Like Benny, Danny views diversity as much more complex and multifaceted than mere corporate racial politics.

When you look at…certain functional organizations, if you come in and you bring a lot of folks who think the same, and they could be as different as night and day in terms of their identity; they can be African-American and Asian and LGBT, whatever else. But, if they, for an example, are right-brained folks who focus on analytics and process, and because as a leader, I like analytics and process, because I'm also right-brained, so I only choose those folks who appeal to me when I talk to them because they appeal to my left brain….Well, I'm not going to have a very diverse organization beyond the looks, and I'm not going to get all I ought to get out of those folks, because I'm not bringing this golden thread that makes an organization better, and that is having the ability to understand that if you can get diverse cognitive toolboxes onto your team, then your work product is better.

While Danny believes workplace diversity is critical, his apologetics are different than most. He believes

What we have to do [is] understand why it's important to have [minorities]. And, it's not because of fairness doctrines. It's not because of affirmative action laws.
It's not because that is the morally appropriate thing to do. It is because when anybody comes onto your team, and if they've got different backgrounds, if they come from a different era, if they've been conditioned differently, then they think probably differently. And, they may be left-brained or right-brained, so that's one thing, so you don't want to have everybody that's all left-brained and think analytics and process. But, you don't want everybody that's all right-brained and strategic strokes and innovative strokes, and really into people and social and engaging and organizational dynamics because you won't get anything done.

Danny believes the key to business success is establishing a safe and supportive work environment for people and nurturing them to discover and offer their best selves to the corporate tasks at hand. What “you have to do,” he explains, is “create the capacity for your employees to feel that they've in some way made themselves personally better through their very association with your organization.” “The way that that is accomplished in a country like this, that is an alleged democracy,” he states is that “you've got to begin to think about the promise that came from this grand experiment called America.”

The grand experiment says that whomever you are, after a couple of hundred years of wrangling about whether or not certain people are actually people or not, whomever you are, here's an opportunity, here's a place for you to come and be your best self and do your best work, and to exist at your highest….Existing to me takes it beyond living, that you literally exist at the highest point that you can. Because, living very often has to do with what a lot of other people are putting on
you. Existing has to do with how you can literally take yourself to the next level from my perspective.

So, having said that, if we create the capacity, which means you have to teach people how to effectively leverage the diversity and include those folks appropriately, so that you get to your best outcome….We don't understand how to do that. We don't understand how to engage people. We don't understand how to help people to understand who they are and what tremendous ability they have.

And, the fact that you don't have to be the smartest person, because what is smarts anyway? You just simply have to be able to contribute, and very often, if the team is diverse, if you've created an environment where you have independence where people can put their opinions, ideas, insights, on the table unfettered, if that environment is decentralized so that, if I’m cleaning the house up as a maid, or if I'm a senior leader, or whatever I am in the community.

Danny argues that a comprehensive understanding of diversity would be hugely valuable to corporate America. “Typically, when we talk about diversity and inclusion, African-American engagement, etc., it's all based on identity,” he points out.

What that tells me is that nobody has recognized the cognitive resources, the smarts, the intel that you have within that segment and that cognitive intel put onto a diverse team is super additive. That's what this is all about.

Danny believes Blacks bring so much more to the table than business gives them license to contribute. “It's not about just how I look and you're being nice and being morally appropriate,” Danny remarks.
If I take this diversity and if I create diverse by design teams and focus them on a business issue, and say, here's the business issue, here's the global outcome. How you all get to that is up to you, but I want you to innovate, I want you to break the mold, bring me something back. You know what you get? You get a hell of a work product back from the diverse by design team that understands what its global mission is, but then, also understands that how it gets to that point can be up for grabs. That's how this thing works, and that's what democracy is all about.

Given the parameters of corporate America, Danny points out that in order for greater numbers of Blacks to successfully achieve, we have some work to do. “There's this thing we've got to get to” he posits.

As African-Americans, we've got to begin to understand what the obstacles are for us, how we address those obstacles; and, I'm not walking around in rose-colored glasses at all, trust me. Racism still exists. It exists at a higher level than people would have you believe. Race is the toughest topic to talk about. It's even tougher than talking about LGBT issues in many cases; certainly tougher than talking about gender issues. And so, it's something that we run from, and we run from it because we understand the super additive nature of the experience; not of my identity, but of my experience.

While he views comprehensive diversity as critical, Danny is clear that competence and expertise are also crucial. Though he explains that he is “not going to put poets on a heart surgeon's team to talk about how best to pierce the heart,” Danny says he is going to make sure that relevant intelligence and background, etc., is on my team, and I don't want them all to be specialists on the topic, because you want people that
can do it differently. You want reality relative to what works in that area, but you want people to view it differently.

I know it sounds like I have gotten very, very simple, but it is the level of simplicity that allows things to work, and we've made them too complicated. We got away from the fact that smarts are critical to getting the best product, and got only into the construct of fairness based on identity.

Danny’s point is that both of these considerations are essential to optimal business operation.

When it comes to the impact of gender in the workplace, Danny acknowledges the challenges that femyles face relative to males, but suggests that race is more onerous in the corporate context.

I can look at womyn of color, and their trajectories versus majority womyn; womyn of color have a tougher time. Is it their gender that's made them have a tougher time or is it their race? What is the differentiating factor there? Easy question, right? You see all kinds of writings now. I get all kind of stuff about how womyn of color, what they need to do in order to be successful in organizations.

Danny discusses workplace racial and gender advantage and disadvantage in terms of privilege. “When I am in any number of situations, as a male, I have privilege sometimes, dependent upon the situation I'm in” he acknowledges.

I have privilege based on any number of different things. I had privilege when I was in New Orleans relative to the power structure in New Orleans pre-Katrina because it was primarily African-American, and I could get around in ways that
some of my majority counterparts never could. And, I had to help them to understand that the reverse was in place for me in many instances when we were in Iowa or other places, right. So, that's an issue of privilege.

Danny emphasizes that privilege is not deliberate. He explains that “unconscious bias” is the issue.

We don't know we're biased around certain things, right…Whenever you tell somebody they're biased, they get upset, especially when you're talking about race, or whatever. So, I figured a better term would be subconscious preference. So, if you just prefer something and you're not really aware of it – it's kind of like those people who talk to us in our own voice. If we're right-brained, they talk to us on a right-brained basis; God, we think they're the smartest people in the world because they resonate with us in some way, subconsciously they do. Same thing I'm saying to you, and that happens.

Like many other respondents, Danny shares the concern that gender often trumps race in corporate horse trading. He recounts a story from his days with a previous company in a completely different position in a Southern city in the early 1980’s. “It was a competition thing and everything else;” he explains.

I had been at the lower level when I had been in college working, and I had done this work in this department. And when it came time for a supervisory position to be filled, they filled it with a majority womyn who had been doing the work for six months. I was floored.

Danny explains that he left the organization and went into a different side of the business “because I was pissed off [and] that's what you do when you're wrong[ed].”
See now, I can't jump from one thing to the other like that. But, I left, and there are numbers of folks who will tell you that if you look at corporate America in a broad brush, you will see a deference for majority womyn versus minorities in the upper ranks of companies…I honestly believe that that is true because there's familiarity, comfort, and trust relative to that segment [among] the vast majority of folks who run…organizations at this point. And so, we have to work to create a level of consciousness relative to the fact that we tend to gravitate toward those with whom we're familiar, or issues with whom we're familiar.

Unlike most participants commenting on whether they are fairly compensated, Danny retorts, “Man, I am never, ever, ever compensated according to my contribution. I don't mean that diffidently. That is about as true a statement as I can make to you.” Although he is one of only three persons (all males) that I spoke with who earns $250,000 or more annually, his feelings on the matter were crystal clear. Danny’s sentiment, in part, appears to be connected with a drive and work ethic based on continuous improvement. “I think everybody that's fairly decent at what they do and that's constantly looking to improve… [has] to always pursue excellence,” he states. “When you get to a certain plateau, and then it's time to see how you can go to the next level….This is the kind of thing we have to constantly do.” “Excellence is not a destination, it's a new direction,” he counsels. “If you're going to be in life, you've got to understand that. You never get there. And, for those folks who live really long, fulfilling lives, when they have three or four careers, it means that they've understood that.”

Danny partially blames “tradition” for his present compensation level.
When I say tradition, what I tell young folks is, to always go into what are considered nerve center positions in organizations. This organization's no different than any other business organization. Nerve center positions are those positions that are viewed as profit centers, not as corporate staff locations or loss centers.

Danny warns,

No matter how difficult the job may be in a corporate staff officer's position you're never going to be considered in the same breath as a person who actually generates customer sales….So, one of my standing rules when I am talking with young folks is that, if you can, do what makes you happy, do what you like to do from a career perspective, to the extent that you can, but do what you love. And, if you do what you love, you'll have fun with that, so if that's a staff position, great.”

“If you come into it from a purely business perspective, and from how do I go to the area that makes me the most money,” he advises, “then you should be mindful of the fact that, if you can get into an operational area where it actually generates revenue, that's where you're going to make the most money.”

While he has received “all kinds of 'atta boys’” and has really enjoyed the work he has done over the years, Danny reveals that his future plans are to translate his comprehensive business knowledge into a professional portfolio of consulting, public speaking, and writing. So, while his current focus is on “doing what [he needs] to do here, now to be successful,”

Ultimately the fun that I'm going to have in the next [several] years is going to be taking these books I'm working on, and really having the opportunity to share
whatever warped knowledge I have…with a broader audience. That'll be fun, and that pays quite well.

This career vision is consistent with the majority of respondents’ identification of entrepreneurship as the ultimate frontier for successful Black achievement.

Danny expounds on his rationale for moving in a different direction.

If you want to keep your life energized, you've got to make up things….After I think I've mastered something, I want to master something else. But, when I think I've gotten to the pinnacle, working in a particular area or doing a particular thing, then I want to do something else. And, it doesn't mean that I'm unstable and I want to jump around, but I do want to do something else. And, what I've seen is…lots and lots and lots of folks who have made their lives much richer by doing that with a planned approach.

In terms of positioning oneself for continued success, Danny extols the virtues of being a good jack-of-all-trades.

The more general you are in an organization, the more valuable you become over time. In other words, if you've got a smattering of experiences in a smattering of different departments, doing a smattering of different things, and you've been smart enough to understand in your time in each of those areas that you would not be the consummate expert in each of those areas, but you spend the time learning the questions that you needed to ask in order to get to a good business outcome,…that is key….That positions you to take a leadership role because leaders are generalist.
Danny’s comments regarding the notion of race work are interesting. “So, if you're talking about marketing, if you're talking about some of these areas that are really critical to how you get the customer in and how you get them spending…money, then that's” a certain perception.

At the same time, if your joy in life is helping develop people, and you want to be in HR, then you shouldn't be slapped around for that. Because, at one time, you didn't find black people in organizations except in HR. That was it. Then, you started to see them a little bit in PR and other…soft functions, rather than nerve center functions.

Even though Danny refers to certain business areas as “soft functions,” he is careful to point out that these areas are nonetheless important. “No company that wants to make money is going to keep a redundancy when they don't have to,” he submits.

And so, when thinking about anything that exists in companies, businesses will typically view them in one of three ways, according to Danny.

It will assess them as to whether or not it meets compliance; they have to do it because of legislators, regulators, or litigators…because of externalities…The next level is character, and the character issue has to do with whether or not the company thinks it's the morally appropriate thing to do to have something in place, or if it's just nice to do from a community perspective, that kind of thing…Then, of course, at the top of the continuum is commerce, and at the level of commerce, you want it because you view it as a business critical must-do. It's the thing we've got to do in order to make the most money that we can make, etc.
“So, as you look at that continuum, very often you [find] things…are done simply because the company believes it has to do them.” These things are “typically negatively viewed or half-assed [and] just done to meet the minimum requirement of your compliance mode.” The second level of character typically

Goes away anytime you have a budget crisis. So, it's only at the third level of commerce that you really have the longevity that you need to have because it's attached back to the success of the business in a tangible, profit-driven way.

While Danny’s ultimate point seems to be that “soft functions” like HR are categorized at the level of commerce and will continue to thrive, there is no in-depth discussion of the apparent reality that their value as “soft” organizational areas renders their more commonly Black managers and executives underpaid relative to their “nerve center” counterparts.

Danny discusses fast tracking broadly.

Well, I've seen fast-tracking before. Back in the day, there were these formalized programs for fast-tracking minorities. You bring a minority in; you take him to five or six departmental areas, and then end up in one eventually, at some point. And, it would be an accelerated approach to the next level. Those all have issues typically. So now, people have MBA tracks, and they try and ensure that they have minority MBA's and that kind of stuff in organizations. But still, there's much more to it than that kind of stuff, man.

You've got the issue of how you build the appropriate networks in your organization, how you build familiarity, comfort, and trust, so that you can be brought into certain networks, whether or not you have a sponsor. Not a mentor,
but a sponsor. There are a number of success factors, and whether or not you know beyond written rules. What are those things that must happen in order to be successful in an organization, and what are those things specific to you that may be added to the things that regularly one would have to deal with simply because of who you are? And, that's not just a racial or minority or womyn thing. That's a thing across the board, but we all know that, because of who we are, there are different issues, different challenges that we have to manage around.

Obtaining sponsorship and otherwise establishing and maintaining healthy organizational relationships, familiarizing oneself with the unwritten company rules, and identifying and resourcefully navigating identity-specific realities seem to be Danny’s core suggestions for achieving significant corporate inclusion and ascendancy.

Danny reveals that his experience with industry mentorship and sponsorship has been mixed. While he has benefited tremendously from some influential leaders, he has faced difficulty with superiors and those in positions of power at other times. “I have had some very strong leaders who have been supportive of me in the organization over the years. I've had some voids where I haven't had those relationships. Organizations change around you.” Danny talks, for instance, about a time when a new position took him back to a city in which he had previously been employed. “When I got back,” he reveals,

There was a whole new leadership team. I had to recreate relationships with [the] senior-most folks. Four years or three years into coming with the company, I had a great relationship with the chief financial officer, which was helpful…When I left finance to go into development, I went into development because the chief executive officer of the company told me that I was too talented to be in finance,
and that I needed to be at the forefront of the company's growth, and he was supportive in moving me there and to development, and in supporting me in development…So, yeah, I’ve had some folks who've been extremely supportive, and then I've had some bullies, where I had to go back and consciously recreate relationships based on work.

Danny believes that another important factor in his successful career progression stems from a critical lesson he learned from his working class father.

My daddy said, on the railroad, he always took the toughest, most complicated job, and that that is what had differentiated him….I did the same thing. Whenever there was something complicated or tough, I took it, I wanted it, [and] I volunteered for it. I still do it now, like an idiot. But, I believe that that's what differentiates you, and if you learn from those things, they literally change your career, but you have to be strategic about how you accept those things, and you have to make people aware why you're accepting them, and what your expectation is. Because, you don't want to do all that work and have success and not have it lead anywhere. Because, when you take the toughest job, stress comes along with it, and the opportunity of winning has tremendous upside. Your losing has tremendous downside.

According to Danny, therefore, strategically engaging challenging opportunities; ensuring that those in positions of power acknowledge your commitment, achievement, and expectations; and realistically assessing the pros and cons are all critical to extraordinary accomplishment.
Danny feels that this kind of adventurous, fighting spirit is critical for top leaders. He comments that “it's important not to run away from a challenge. We evaluate our heroes based on the villains that they have to fight. Superman wouldn't be anything if he wasn't fighting somebody that was really – know what I mean?” Danny explains that substantive lessons can be gleaned from such experiences.

When you think about career, and you think about placement, and you think about being able to go to the next level, whether you're doing it in another organization, you need to be able to talk about what you did, what you were able to win at. Or, in some cases, what you didn't win at, what you were involved in…Because, I've had some things that our company didn't win at, but simply my involvement took me light years in front of my peers relative to the experiential knowledge….I think that's critical to being on this fast-track thing. I think it's critical to be able to [convey] to people that you've been in those kinds of scrapes.

Regarding the impact of pigmentism or complexion in the workplace, Danny does not believe that he has been negatively impacted.

Well, from a career perspective, I don't think it's had much at all impact on me from a standpoint of somebody choosing a fair-skinned black man rather than me, or engaging them rather than me from a business perspective. Now, of course, I've never worked in an African-American-owned business. I do know that based on my age, and this is true, that I have heard of folks who were working for Black people in Black organizations who never could make it into management simply because they were too dark, because all the management – and I can mention a couple of insurance companies and the like where I grew up where that was the
case. But, for me in corporate American, in huge organizations…I don't think that I've seen an impact.

Far from stating that complexion is a non-issue, Danny shares that his ex-wife is a “very fair-skinned…beautiful…Black womyn, [who] can get into any door, out of any door…at the time that sxe wanted simply because of her looks, because of her skin color.” He adds that his daughter Looks like Vanessa Williams [and] can get in any bloody where sxe wants. I mean, sxe looks like Vanessa Williams. Sxe's got the beautiful eyes, the fair skin, and the red hair, and sxe's a real pretty girl, but whether it's White or Black or whatever, sxe goes wherever sxe wants. So, I see it in my life. I haven't seen it in my professional life.

Danny vividly recalls one corporate experience where a dark-skinned male professional was viewed in a particularized and decidedly negative manner. He explains that when he was with a former company, he had a colleague who was “a very dark-skinned brother. This is back in the time…when these little purse things, little leather things you could hold in your hand [and] put your wallet in and…stuff” were popular.

It was a thing that his cool brothers walked around with in the ’70's. And, Henry would bring his to work very often. Now, Henry had a master’s in public administration and he signed his name Henry Harold Hastings, MPA, and it would upset the majority folks like no end, that he constantly made them aware that he had a master’s degree and was working on an MBA, a second one.

Anyway, Henry is in a meeting on a Saturday in the conference room, and it got a tad heated about what needed to happen. It's getting close to lunchtime, and
they're going back and forth. Henry picks up his leather brief and unzips it, and when he reaches into it, everybody starts jumping on the floor…. They were jumping on the floor! I mean, on the floor!…So, he comes out with a five-dollar bill so he can give it to the folks to go get his lunch. It was amazing. Although it was nearly 1980 when this incident occurred, the fact that White colleagues seriously believed a Black colleague might brandish a weapon to settle a workplace debate speaks volumes about racism and pigmentism in America.

“Also, I've had things happen to me,” Danny shares.

I was checking in with the two senior-most people in the organization back when we owned hotels once, and both of them started messing with me. ‘Danny, we got done five minutes ago, why have you got to be so complicated? Why are you still over there?’ It was a joke and I was taking so long, so I just casually said, ‘Well, I'm still here because I'm signing the release that says I won't steal the iron from the room.’ So, they didn't make them sign it, but they made me sign it. I'm in a business suit just like they are.

This mid 1990’s incident is a prime example of different on-the-job treatment, although, thankfully, it did not occur in the actual workplace.

While Danny reveals that he has been through some tough years and dealt with “a lot of stuff like that,” he points out that “times have changed in [that] nobody tells me I'm a credit to my race anymore like my first boss used to…Now, you're dealing with things that are much more subtle than that.” Although he believes it is important to celebrate significant progress, he feels we all must do more to address the subtleties that continue
to translate into sub-par workplace experiences for some and smooth-sailing until proven rocky for others.

Danny underscores the complexity of “subconscious bias” via his own uneasiness with seeing a Black doctor for the first time.

I was from a small town in [a Southern state], and in my hometown, there were no Black doctors, right—none. I went to my first Black doctor when I was [in my late 30’s]….Now, in the back of my mind, even though I didn't admit it to myself, there was a comfortability issue with my doing that. I had to come to grips with the fact that I had been conditioned growing up, all the way through college and the like, that all my doctors had always been White. Now, there were none in my little hometown out where I grew up the first 18 years, but there were certainly some in [larger cities nearby]. So, what was it in the back of my mind?

See, this is what I'm saying. When people do dumb stuff, very often it's not because…there's this nefarious, undermining, underlying issue there. It's because they've been conditioned so stupidly, and the conditioning is around your identity. It's not around your smarts…They know nothing else about you, which is why I am so stuck on this topic of smarts. So, maybe this approach I mentioned…earlier has to do with smarts, because it was such a big issue in my life, and people don't see you for your smarts. That's how they ought to see you…It shouldn't be that you're considered less competent or incompetent until you prove your competence; it should be the other way around, just like it is with everybody else.
Danny shares some interesting comments regarding workplace attire and successful Black managers. Different from most respondents, he believes that while suitability has its place, there should also be sufficient room for personal style.

In some ways, I think the idea of smart casual, corporate casual dress has been a deterrent in certain instances for people of color in organizations, in some instances. At the same time, there is an issue of appropriateness relative to the clothes that you wear and the way that you present yourself in an organization. I don't think my suits are plain Jane suits. I do a lot of little things to make them not be cookie-cutter plain stuff: ties and shirts and shoes and the whole nine yards. But, I do think that there's an issue of appropriateness relative to how we dress in an organization. The old saying was that you don't wear a basketball uniform out onto the football field to play football, and everybody else is in pads, and you're in shorts and a tank top. So, you don't.

At the same time, organizations have got to allow you to be you, even within the context of rules. So, always within the context of the rules, you've got to be allowed to be you. So, you're never going to see me in certain things that are just plain because I don't like that. But you're going to see ties that are unusual; you're going to see shirts that are unusual very often. You're going to see suits with larger legs, and you're going to see suits with – that's what you're going to see with me at this point. Now, I'm probably going to change that before long, but that's what I like right now.

So, when you talk about dress in organizations, I don't think it's as big of an issue as it was in the '70's and '80's. I don't think people are as uptight as they used
to be about it. But, there were times when we had folks who would come in, in sky blue suits, all kinds of stuff that just weren't appropriate for business-wear, and we had to have people who had been around – I can remember a number of people – this is taking me way back – young, African-American professionals who were talked to by some of the older heads, the older Black folks when they came in about toning their dress down. Now…I can't recall having said that at all in the last 18 years, not one time.

While Danny feels there are a host of prospects for Blacks in this industry, he cautions that times are changing, and Black aspirants need to be conscious of the new cultural and business landscape.

I think very broadly, there's a whole lot of opportunity for us, some of which we've not taken advantage of, most of which we've not had the opportunity to take advantage of. A great deal of it, we've not taken advantage of. That this industry, like any other industry right now, is a very peculiar industry in terms of what it takes for us to continue to be successful. And, in some ways, I've got a friend who says, we found ourselves out of style versus how we used to be in organizations where they had all these tracking programs and all that stuff that you're talking about. Well, that's no longer the case.

And so, what we have to do is, we have to understand that this world is changing as African-American executives. Very soon, the two-thirds of the Hispanic population, for an example, that currently can't engage politically because: 1) they were illegals who came into the country that can't vote, and that they're the children of those folks who, when they turn 18, will be able to vote.
So, when that happens, the folks who were native-born here who are Latinos, and the kids of the folks who've come, who can't vote, they're going to change the dynamic in a major way, both in terms of politics and business and business opportunities. And, we've got to understand that all that stuff is taking place right now relative to this country domestically.

Danny strongly suggests that upcoming Black managers broadly prepare themselves for industry success.

We've got to understand as African-Americans that we [exist] now in a global world, and the global nature of this world I think will create tremendous opportunities for us. But we've got to see those opportunities for what they are and as young folks begin to position ourselves to take care of and engage around those opportunities, whether it's being able to speak a couple of foreign languages, making sure that we have some business engagement well outside the United States [and] making sure we've done some learning abroad and that kind of thing as we go through our schooling. Those are things that I didn't have to think about, and those are the things that we've got to begin to think about now—especially if you're talking about this hospitality industry. Because I think more companies that are U.S. companies are going to be bought by foreign entities, and we're not going to be ready to take advantage.

Danny is a huge proponent of Black personal responsibility. “The onus always starts with us first,” he says.

No one will have an abiding interest in our affairs like we do. It would be unnatural for any other group to have an abiding interest in our affairs at the same
level that we have, and that's just the way it is. So, if we're going to make change,…we have to be the lead catalyst for that change. That's the way the world is wired. So, we have to understand that, and we have to position ourselves to engage, and that's why, again, if we're simply focusing on our identity without focusing on the intrinsic good that comes from our cognition, we're missing the boat.

Danny shares an elaborate story about a time when he visited a high-end Native American casino as part of a larger team and grasped the magnanimous power of moving from dependence to interdependence as employees came from a wide radius around the property. “When the Indians hurt,” he explains, “folks around there hurt.” His point is that “Black folks hurt alone.”

We've not created anything of our own that allows us to create an interdependent situation for ourselves where when we hurt in the 'hood, people hurt outside the 'hood….We've not created any kind of situation that…causes…folks outside to be mutually dependent on us for how they live their lives and how well we do. We're just totally dependent on them.

Taffy

The Planned Manager

“I planned my career out. I knew where I wanted to go early on and then [did] whatever I needed to do to get to that point.”

Taffy is a general manager for a major hotel chain. While sxe has some difficulty classifying herself as “lighter” or “darker,” sxe eventually places herself in the lighter group. Taffy ultimately characterizes her complexion as “a happy medium” between the
two categories as sxe is “the color of a brown bag.” At 45-49 years of age, Taffy holds a bachelor’s degree and earns $150,000 to $199,999 a year. Having begun as a management trainee and risen to overseer of total operations of a large hotel in a major metropolitan area, Taffy reveals, “I planned my career out. I knew where I wanted to go early on and then [did] whatever I needed to do to get to that point.”

Taffy has relatively strong faith in her current corporate environment. Sxe believes the impact of her race in the workplace is “nominal” or “very little” and truly feels that her organization rewards anyone who works hard. Taffy attributes this progressive attitude, in part, to the fact that her company “[has] a ‘diversity plan,’ at an executive level where they have identified people who are succeeding, for lack of a better word, to make sure you’re on the correct path.”

Taffy explains that sxe had a mentor early in her career because of a formalized company program. “We met probably quarterly just to talk about what was going on, what I was doing, how I was getting there, if I had goals or what my path was to reach them,” sxe says. And while her mentor left the company two years into their relationship, Taffy reports “I think I spoke with him more after he left the company than I did while he was at the company just because we’re both in [the same field].”

Taffy is very realistic. Although sxe “[has] been involved in several company diversity initiatives” and does not see her organization as any worse or better than any other, sxe is

A firm believer, maybe right or wrong, that people support people, promote people, mentor people who look like them….I mean, it’s humyn nature you grasp toward people that you have a lot in common….So unless you give reason,
initiative, drive, programs, incentives for people to step outside of that box, it just
doesn’t happen.

Regarding the impact of gender in the workplace, Taffy feels that gender acceptance
has been much more successful than racial diversity. “It goes back to humyn nature,” sxe
posits.

I think it’s easier for a White male to identify with a White femyle as opposed to a
Black male or a Black femyle or for that matter an Asian or a Hispanic because
they have more in common. So it’s easier to fill a quota if you have a quota, again
for a lack of a better word, with a White femyle than it is with an African-
American or any other minority….It’s just an easier process.

Asked whether sxe feels that White womyn are doing better than they ever have
before, Taffy replies,

Oh, absolutely. Especially with a company like ours, I mean, you just have to look
at the track record. And again, you kind of remember I’m speaking on what I
know and this is the only company I’ve ever worked for….So yeah, have I seen
womyn at my tenure become more successful than minorities? Absolutely.

Taffy stops short of characterizing her racial identity as a workplace negative. While
sxe recognizes that sxe faces particularized challenges, sxe believes it is still possible to
successfully achieve. “I don’t know if I would say it wasn’t helpful because truly I love
being Black,” sxe remarks.

I don’t think it’s a curse at all. But I think that certainly you have to prove
yourself more than the norm, you have to work harder. Do you get recognized?
Absolutely, I think I’ve been recognized for my efforts.
“For the industry that [sxe is] in and for the job that [sxe is] doing,” Taffy feels that sxe is fairly compensated. While sxe strongly believes that sxe would not be making less if sxe were a White male, sxe concedes, “If I had to guess, probably, yeah. Yeah, with my tenure and experience if I [had to] guess, I would probably say yes….I would probably be more successful.”

Taffy discloses that sxe has faced challenges because of her gender and race in the workplace. “Yeah, I certainly have had some experience with both sides of that where I was treated less fairly because of being both femyle and an African-American femyle,” sxe offers.

I was working with an all White male executive staff at a board meeting once, and I disagreed with them and I was the only one. By chance I happened to disagree with the subject at hand and was pulled to the side after the meeting and told I need to be more like them, which was actually quite a shock.

An internal example of discrimination that Taffy shares is about a time when sxe responded to a guest customer service issue and the guest said, “‘And you are who? No, you don’t understand I asked to speak to the manager.’ So, yeah, of course I think every African-American general manager has experienced that.” Perhaps the most telling part of Taffy’s comment is the presumption that “every” Black manager has experienced discrimination from a guest.

Taffy’s remarks regarding Black executives and workplace attire were interesting. “I mean we dress as well if not better than most,” sxe submits. “I think we dress smart, I mean, very well dressed. That’s never been an issue.” Although Taffy states that dress has not been an issue for successful Black managers, sxe states “I’ve seen that in our
company as late as 1995…womyn were not allowed to wear pants. So, yeah, I’ve seen that more with the company culture, but now as far as race it’s not an issue.” Taffy posits that “[Blacks] tend to look better, dress better.” Though sxe comments that “[Blacks] just have a sense of style by nature,” sxe points out that it would be a problem if Blacks dressed badly. Taffy adds, however, that “it would be bad for any executive.”

Different from many of the respondents, Taffy is very clear that sxe has not benefited from any specific corporate sponsorship. Sxe says sxe has advanced the long, hard way. This issue seems to strike a nerve with Taffy, and sxe sees this as a critical area of improvement for her immediate and parent companies. Ultimately, sxe indict s “humyn nature” and discusses the importance of establishing “healthy mentorship programs” and engaging aspirant Black executives in diverse areas of company management.

I think there should be healthy mentorship programs and…I don’t like that sponsor thing because I generally like to sponsor. No one would sponsor me, but I don’t want anybody sponsoring me…As far as a mentor, I have mentored a lot of folks within [my company] in the sales organization. [It was] very healthy because it was being able to communicate, being able to bounce something off of someone who already had that experience not necessarily a goal to promote you. Do you know what I mean? Or someone to help direct you on the right path, someone to give you candid feedback when you are going astray or going down the wrong path. And again, I think it’s humyn nature and people are – it’s easier for me to take an African-American womyn and say, ‘You know what, maybe you should do that or maybe you should rethink that or maybe you should do this, than it is to take a young white male, if you will—although I’ve mentored White
males. I just think [through] humyn nature [they are] more comfortable with – and I think vice versa, you know what I’m saying? So I think to answer your question…they need healthy mentorships. I think they need to be able to retain. I’ve seen a lot of African-Americans come through our doors but [many others] come through the doors and go out the doors because of no support.

Taffy describes the reality of no support as having nowhere to turn and no way to transcend the glass ceiling.

And it’s very different if you – we have a lot of – well not a lot but quite a few African-Americans in our corporate headquarters on senior positions. Not as many in the sales, it’s operations it’s very difficult to retain them if you don’t have someone working with them or focusing on them. So yeah, I would say healthy mentorship programs.

Taffy sees her level of educational attainment as roughly average. Sxe implies that the Associate’s degree sxe had at the time sxe began to climb the corporate latter was above average, but now believes even her Bachelor’s degree will carry less and less weight moving forward, even though there “absolutely” are still many other general managers who have no college degree at all.

Taffy points out that sxe (and others like her) is particularly challenged as a womyn and a Black person in her industry. Sxe views excellent on-the-job performance as a central strategy in turning the tide, or at least leveling the playing field. “I think it’s extremely important,” sxe offers.

First of all, it’s the only way you’re going to get recognized. And I do believe that you have to work harder as a womyn and I think that’s across board I don’t think
that’s just in hospitality I think that is in corporate America period where Blacks were successful. I think if you interviewed any Black across the board they would say, ‘Yeah, I had [to work] – or I felt like I worked harder.’ So I think again education and I think it’s focus. I mean, you have to know your job. You have to know what you’re doing. It’s often said they got away with it because it’s the old boy network, but there isn’t really in our company [an] African-American network. You don’t hear people [saying] it’s truly about what you do and what you know as opposed to who you know, you know.

Another major strategy in effective career development, according to Taffy is actively establishing business contacts.

I would say that you do need to network. You do need to let people know what your goals are. And going back to the mentorship and I think if I got anything out of that or the biggest thing I got out of it is that that mentor at the time has passed that on. This is what sxe wants to do; this is where sxe would like to go. And I tell people that I mentor, ‘You are the person who is going to promote you. You have to let people know [what you desire].’ …When I think of hiring for certain positions in the hotel, I look back and say who may be a good candidate and who is qualified, number one, and then who’s interested and who wants to do that? And who can I help along the way, you know, who’s the best fit for the job, but yet who has a passion for it? So I think when you have a passion for your job and you let people know that, eventually it turns to fruition.

For Taffy, then, having clear goals, networking effectively, and having true passion are central for successful career progression.
Vinny
The Representative Director

“I’m doing this for another person after me, tomorrow. Because, I know I’m standing on the shoulders of someone who did this before me...It's not about me, and that's how I approach it.” “In the eyes of my boss, I’m all things Black and represent all things Black. So, I have to succeed at all costs, because I know after me, they're going to be looking and asking.”

Vinny holds a director title at a large gaming company. He describes himself as “dark-skinned, but...not ‘burple’” (i.e., so black he’s purple). Vinny is a 40-44 year old man, who has some college education but does not possess a college degree, and he earns $100,000 to $149,999 annually. He works with “a very targeted audience” as his charge is to identify, recruit, and manage diverse suppliers. With broad operational experience across many operational and support areas in different businesses, Vinny is very confident about what he brings to the table.

Although he does not hold a college degree, Vinny feels that his “entire career portfolio” often renders him more qualified than others because of the depth and breadth of his managerial experience. Educationally he sees himself as “on par if not slightly less” prepared than his colleagues. Not having a college degree has made business life somewhat challenging for Vinny. He reports, for example, “I’ve had to prove time and time again [that] I can compete with the best of them.” Vinny views this reality as patently unfair since he recently attended the National Black MBA Conference and his biggest concern with aspirants was that many had little to no work experience.
On the special importance of excellence for Black executives, Vinny believes, “Every day I’ve got to be at the top of my game. I can’t fall asleep at the wheel. Being an African-American, in particular…, we’ve got to be twice as hard, be twice as fast.” The problem, Vinny explains, is that “America really is not ready for this thing called diversity.” “Why is there a double standard?” he asks. “This is a double standard that [there] is a different set of rules that apply to you and [me].”

Although he describes much of the change in the industry regarding diversity and interracial interaction as good, Vinny feels that this change is not occurring fast enough. He contends, for example, that “Race has had everything to do with [his career success]” because of the kind of work he has typically done. While Vinny is concerned that Whites often do not appreciate that some of their comments, like the ubiquitous, “You speak so well,” are inappropriate, he does not feel that everything about racial consideration in the workforce is bad. He points out that his race was a helpful factor in obtaining his current position. Vinny thinks his company believes he “can relate better” to constituents and is “in a better position to diffuse [a] situation if the response to a request for assistance is unfavorable. From a technical perspective, Vinny feels that “If you’re going to give someone bad information, [you should] say it in love.” He says he helps people understand that while his company’s primary goal is to find a way to say yes, there are times when they must say no.

In terms of different treatment and workplace discrimination, Vinny explains that his “corporate speak” often confuses people who are “surprised” that he’s Black. “I can see it; it’s all over their face,” he says.
Regarding the impact of gender on his career, Vinny says it has been minimal. Though Vinny stops short of saying that Black femyles are more advantaged than Black males, he does believe that they are “counted twice, once as a gender and once as an ethnicity.” While he admits that he does not “know what it means to be a womyn,” he posits that his gender “would slant more to the positive than the negative.” While Vinny states that career longevity may be a concern for “womyn of childbearing age,” he specifically views his status as an African-American male as “an advantage” in the gaming industry.

Vinny acknowledges that much of what he has learned and accomplished is due to some helpful support from key mentors. His most trusted mentor is an African-American femyle, who has counseled him for well over two decades. As well, Vinny notes that his pastor has been his religious mentor. In addition to African-American mentors, Vinny acknowledges that White male mentorship has been instrumental in his development. Of one White mentor, Vinny comments, “He saw in me what others saw. He pulled me out and fast tracked me, which launched me to higher heights.” Whaleorship makes perfect sense since, as Vinny explains, “They were the ones in power.”

Vinny suggests that no matter how talented one is, both mentorship and sponsorship are critical. “We all need sponsorship,” he offers. And he gratefully grants, “I’ve got lots of sponsors.” “You can have a mentor who’s your sponsor, but you can have a sponsor who’s not your mentor. Sponsorship provides resources, but [you must prove] on your own [that] you can make it.” Vinny clarifies that sponsors are the ones who offer such well-placed comments as “He’s pretty sharp” and “look[] out for [your] interests.” “Mentors,” on the other hand, “tell you the hard cold facts.”
Vinny reveals that his workday environment is not always smooth. Just a couple of weeks prior to our interview, for example, he says he was asked if he was “an angry Black man” after privately disagreeing with one of his company’s vice presidents.

I wanted to say, ‘How dare you even go there. I’m disagreeing with you because of your approach to this problem we’re trying to solve. It has nothing to do with the fact that I’m Black.’ I don’t think anyone would have agreed with him. He was just wrong, but I’ve not had any direct interaction based on the hue of my skin as being perceived one way or the other.

Regarding workplace dress, Vinny says “we have to be suited every day because at my level we meet customers.” Beyond a workplace requirement, Vinny like several other study participants reveals that his professional presentation is part of his overall identity and an expression of his personality. While he states that “It is important that we wear what best represents us” [as] “front of the house” managers, he comments, “I was raised in such a way that I’ve always worn professional attire, even in high school.” Vinny points out that he is also “always clean shaven.”

In terms of the importance of recognizing and addressing racially-based discrimination in the corporate context, Vinny offers, “I didn’t get where I am by being a naïve individual. I will call people on it, and I do it in a non-confrontational way.”

Vinny is quick to state that he is not fairly or equitably compensated. For example, he has an African-American femyle counterpart in another company that annually earns well over $100,000 more than he. More importantly, perhaps, Vinny feels it is “very possible that [a similarly situated] White male [in his current company] would be making more and doing less without the life experiences” because there is a double standard. He even
suspects that “someone’s going to change the rules when [Blacks] start[] getting an advantage.”

While Vinny acknowledges that “[Blacks] can’t achieve perfection,” he believes “we can achieve excellence” and insists that “failure is not an option.” And though he posits that “everyone’s good” in corporate America, he contends that “[Blacks] have to be excellent. That’s the 80/20 rule.”

When it comes to repairing the racial divide in the executive hospitality workforce, Vinny places much of the onus on the majority. He feels that Whites should

Embrace diversity in the fullest context of its meaning. They need to recognize that they’re not the smarter ones in the room. They don’t always have the best solutions for…problems. They have to look outside their own comfort zone.

While he believes that successful Blacks have a responsibility to give back to their community, he cautions that although “some degree of success” has been attained “we are still very, very vulnerable.” Although Blacks have begun to reach positions of power and influence, Vinny is concerned that expectations from the Black community are sometimes too high. And though he directs resources and provides assistance when and where he legitimately can, he notes, “If I don’t make the right decision[s], it’s my head on the chopping block.” “In terms of the acceptance in our community,” he feels there needs to be a greater realization that “we’re not the enemy.”

Vinny realizes that what he does on a daily basis is not just about him. “I’m doing this for another person after me, tomorrow. Because, I know I'm standing on the shoulders of someone who did this before me…It's not about me, and that's how I approach it.” “In the eyes of my boss,” Vinny notes,
I’m all things Black and represent all things Black. So, I have to succeed at all costs, because I know after me, they're going to be looking and asking. And, I've already been put in those situations where we've had news sightings on the jobsite; we've had EEOC issues.

Vinny says he constantly asks himself, “How does this best reflect my people?” “We’re always on our Ps and Qs,” he feels. “I’m always cognizant” of operating in “Vinny corporate mode.” “I’m not talking about being less than genuine. [I’m talking about] playing the game and [that] has been going on for years.”

Kelly

The Solo Manager

“I don't think that my being a Black femyle has really helped [or] significantly hurt my chances. But it definitely has left me always on the minority side because traditionally there is only one on any executive team.” “I can’t call another Black femyle [in] a big city and go, how’d you do it, because there was none, there was no one else to pave the way for me.” “There’s a different level of scrutiny [across a number of areas] of being the only one.” “I bring something that’s naturally different because of who I am…. [and]

I…absolutely realize that who I am is a bigger representation to people.”

Kelly is a vice president with a large gaming company. Sxe falls in “the lighter group” of Blacks in terms of complexion, is 30-34 years of age, holds both a bachelor’s and an MMH, and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. With a strong background in marketing and finance, Kelly matriculated into the company through a highly selective and structured leadership program.
Although sxe is eternally categorized as a minority, Kelly does not think that being a Black femyle has really helped her in any way. In many more corporate instances than not, sxe finds sxe is the only Black femyle, and often the only femyle.

Despite her relative isolation as a Black femyle, Kelly says sxe has benefited from a number of mentor relationships. And while White male mentorship has been the norm, things have distinctly changed over the last five years as sxe has had femyle as well as male guides. Even though Kelly finds that sxe is typically different from her colleagues in terms of race and gender, sxe points out that “[sxe] bring[s] something that’s naturally different because of who [sxe] is.”

I meet similar work experiences, similar backgrounds, educationally right, but because of who I am and the life that I live, and the fact that – like in this property in [this particular city], I lead a group that is made up of almost 50% an African-American frontline team, and I’m the only African-American executive. So, without anything else, I do absolutely realize that who I am is a bigger representation to people.

Realizing that Blacks and womyn are sometimes relegated to certain positions, Kelly reports that sxe is very careful about the various roles sxe assumes. While sxe is very interested in humyn resources, for example, a White mentor counseled, “You are better than being pigeonholed at HR. Do not go into that early in your career.” Kelly says this is some of the best advice that sxe has been given. “I’m going to just be really honest with you,” he revealed.
I think you'd be a great HR person, [but] you do a disservice to your career to do that too early... You're an excellent operator, leading people, [and] there's not enough people who look and feel and talk like you out there in operations.

In the general scheme of things, Kelly feels that her gender has been more helpful to her career progression than her race since there initially were not very many womyn in her field. And though there have never been more than a “small handful of African-American executives” in her company, Kelly sees this as more of a social issue than a workplace problem.

Kelly acknowledges that sxe has been fast tracked. While sxe credits solid mentorship and “people speaking up on [her] behalf,” sxe notes that none of her sponsors have been African-American. Kelly believes that most of her company’s mentoring and sponsorship programs have been less formal in the past, but says things have recently become much more formalized. As a result of this formalization, sxe has “ended up mentoring most of the minority [associates] that come through” the organization’s pipeline.

Kelly is proud of her organizational accomplishments. Though there has been a lot of “push and pull,” sxe feels that sxe “blend[s] in very well. It doesn’t mean that life’s been rosy, but I’m wearing my skin every day.” From a racial or discrimination perspective, Kelly believes the greatest interracial challenge is “ignorance in every sense of the word.” One of her favorite examples is a story about “a very high ranking city official” who once casually remarked, “You know New York, you’re not like all the other Blacks down here.” Kelly says sxe was “internally floored” that this official felt his comment was acceptable.
Although Kelly feels sxe is fairly compensated, sxe suspects that sxe falls on the low end of the acceptable range. And while sxe does not view her current package as unfair, sxe laments that, “There’s only one time when I didn’t have to negotiate my salary and that was when I worked for a womyn.” Overall, sxe imagines that sxe is “roughly above the median.” Kelly believes one of the reasons why sxe is not making more is that there is a cushion for people who move with their families to take on a new position. Sxe does not think this is fair since someone without a family could be “in debt to [her or his] eyeballs.” Interestingly, Kelly says sxe is aware of people in similar roles who make a whole lot more than sxe does.

Regarding workplace attire, Kelly comments, “Everyone tells me I’m the best dressed person here.” “I think you have to look more the part than anyone else,” sxe adds. Kelly is keenly aware that, “There’s a different level of scrutiny [across a number of areas] of being the only one” in terms of race and/or gender. “Unfortunately,” sxe adds, “I’m also the youngest one.”

Kelly sees the corporate playing field as fundamentally unequal. Sxe understands that it is critically important for her as a Black femyle to perform excellently. And although sxe “[doesn’t] ever want to be questionable,” sxe remarks, “I’ve seen [White] executives get away with crazy things!” As someone who was born in a foreign country, came here at a very young age, and became a manager as a very young adult, Kelly understands the expectations of the majority corporate culture and focuses on being appropriate and excellent at all times.

Kelly also believes that what sxe does and does not accomplish is not just about her. “I’m doing my thing for other people,” sxe says. “You have a legacy whether you care to
or not,” sxe submits. Sxe discloses that sxe has a “deep-rooted fear” that sxe might not be successful. Sxe fully appreciates that “there is no mediocre” for people like her, and sxe doesn’t want any of her mistakes to translate into problems for others who may look like her.

In terms of hospitality challenges and strategies for improvement, Kelly agrees with others that “The industry is holistically nepotistic.” “There [are] just not enough of us,” sxe points out. “When our network is larger, it helps.” Kelly believes that beyond the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality and the Black MBAs, her company must continue to identify different sources for discovering and developing young Black talent.

Additionally, Kelly wants to see more Blacks in key leadership roles in the hospitality industry. Sxe feels there has to be increased variety as there’s so much more that Blacks can do. Kelly maintains “there’s more that the industry itself should be doing” to improve the status of Blacks.

Kelly sees excellence as a critical aperture to successful industry achievement and mentee development. In short, sxe feels that those who can, must not only do, but teach and inspire others to action. Since Kelly believes that sxe “lead[s] and inspire[s] really, really well” and sxe “know[s] that [sxe is] better, faster, [and] smarter than others with similar credentials,” it is her responsibility to successfully achieve and mentor, sponsor, and model for others.

Finally, Kelly is all for doing what one can to get ahead. Asked whether formal career planning or hard work and serendipity is the way to go, sxe responds “Twice I've sat down and done the plan, and twice it happened. Other times, it's [an unexpected] call [that has resulted in a new position].” Kelly’s advice, therefore, is to reflect and prepare,
but also be aware that there is no substitute for being “in the right place at the right time with the right mix of experiences.”

Benny

The Promoted Manager

“You gotta have…a Don King…somebody to promote you and promote your work.”

Benny is a vice president plus with a large gaming company. He is a “fairer-skinned” man 30-34 years of age, who holds both a bachelor’s and an MBA, and earns between $150,000 and $199,999 a year. Having entered the company via a structured management program, Benny’s everyday responsibilities encompass strategic and tactical functions.

Although he has never sat and thought about the impact of race on his career progression, Benny feels that he encounters some form of workplace discrimination daily. And whether these occurrences are malicious or simply byproducts of ignorance, he reveals that “there are times when it’s obvious that people are not comfortable dealing with someone with [his] physical attributes as well as professional attributes or accolades.”

While Benny concedes that he is relatively young for his level of corporate authority and responsibility and he suspects that some colleagues doubt his ability on those grounds, he views some of the scrutiny he receives as plainly “unwarranted or unjustifiable.” Benny shares that “the common example” of workplace discrimination is when a guest with a question automatically assumes that a White colleague is more senior, when the two professionally dressed individuals are standing side by side. The most frequent internal infraction, Benny reveals, is a “common questioning of direction,
[a] questioning of, why we’re doing something the way we’re doing it. And…not seeing others questioned the same way.”

Educationally, Benny considers himself above average for his company position. And, although he thinks the gaming and hospitality industries are “catching up” with other professions, he characterizes “bringing intelligent folks into the business” as a practice “still in its infancy.”

While Benny thinks his company’s results-oriented focus partially mitigates the effects of sexism, he views the gaming industry and the larger world of business as male-dominated and feels that gender impacts workplace realities and treatment since “it’s a lot about what you have an affinity for and who you can relate to.” He believes Whites are advantaged and grants that his maleness has not held him back, but is unwilling to establish whether Black males or Black femyles are better positioned for success in the industry.

Benny adds, however, that while the issue of Blacks’ complexion is virtually a non-issue for Whites now, as opposed to even five years ago, “for those that it comes into play for…, there’s less tolerance or less acceptance of, darker-skinned brothers than [for] femyle[s].” He posits that darker skin in and of itself is not problematic. Benny identifies such “cultural elements” as “hairstyles, make-up, [and] accessories” as the real points of concern and explains, “There’re certain things I think that have been put in play that are deemed appropriate and expected as it relates to industry. And when people deviate from that, there’s a lack of tolerance for it in general terms.” Benny ultimately labels the stereotypical view of dark-skinned Black men a “cultural stigma” and sees their negative perception as “an intimidation thing,” especially “when you add the element of darker-
skinned brothers with some type of maybe dreads or some kind of cultural hair style…or if you throw a darker-skinned brother in there with a bald head.”

Regarding attire, Benny remarks that there is a “crispness” in the presentation of most successful Black executives. While a certain level of expectation exists, he admits that some of the pressure to dress exceptionally well might be self-imposed. “There may be this feeling that minorities have inside that, you know what, in order for me to put myself on the same level, I should dress a certain way, or that’s how I differentiate myself.” “I would say [African-Americans] are more self-conscious about appearance,” Benny continues.

Nothing wrong with it, but I just think we are. I think because, one, we’ve always, you know, in general, at least I have, always felt that there needs to be that extra step or something extra to put myself on par with someone, that’s probably less in stature than me.

Benny also feels that Blacks are disadvantaged, in part, because of their under-representation in corporate settings. Pointing out that relationships are often more important than what you know, Benny says “there’re a lot of people who’ve moved around because of who they know.” And although he believes the same thing happens with Blacks, he contends “there are so few Blacks in business that we’ve benefited less from this than others have. So, you know, in pretty much every regard and aspect, yeah, we have to work harder.”

Benny comments that he is fairly compensated, although he admits that he really has no idea what other people in his company make. Though he cannot imagine any of his
White counterparts make less than he does, he says he would be hard pressed to say they make more; and, even if they do, he imagines it is only “slightly” more.

In terms of general improvement, Benny recommends that corporate denizens “open up their world to those different than them.” He sees this as a diversity issue that critically includes “experiences and backgrounds,” and “beliefs,” as opposed to focusing simply on race and gender. Benny not only feels that recruiters must seek talent in nontraditional places, but he also believes it is essential to allow newfound, diverse talent to “be who they are” and “not try[] to conform them to the belief system that is in place.”

While he discusses areas of racial improvement, Benny points out that he can never forget that he’s Black. Although “you wanna believe that it’s not an issue,” he comments, “at the end of the day, it does play a part.” “I think…we’re still in a day and age where it matters regardless of what people say. I mean, we’re not at a point where people don’t see differences in race. We’re not there yet.”

Benny takes the recognition of racial difference in the workplace, or awareness, in stride. He likens it to the nervousness he always felt before a grade school or collegiate sports match, and says “it keeps me on my toes…It makes my preparation that much more intense, and, you know, gets me ready.” Benny thinks this kind of mental treatment is crucial, since “if you dwell on it, you bring an energy that follows you and will be destructive more than constructive going forward.”

Regarding excellence, Benny insists that “you gotta be good at what you do” because “results matter.” “Whether you’re white, red, black, or green,” he submits, “results break through all the B.S.” and the “cream eventually rises to the top.” Pressed for clarification, Benny makes two additional points: (1) “In most cases [Blacks] have to work harder”
than their White counterparts, and (2) “We have less people to push us along, irrespective of how great the work product is. So, even if our product was mediocre, there’s less of a tolerance for mediocre work product than it is for a majority person.”

Not only is Benny quick to point out that he has been fast tracked, but he sees having a well-placed sponsor or champion as “the biggest thing” that propelled his career growth. He insists that “you gotta have…a Don King…somebody to promote you and promote your work.” In addition to one major company sponsor, Benny says he has three other mentors to whom he can turn for professional and personal advice.

Benny considers himself “a Black man in business” that just so happens to work in the sub-sector of gaming. Just as he benefits from mentorship, he extends himself broadly to “people…that are Black, that are White, that are Hispanic;” and, he points out, “a lot of them don’t even work in this business.”
Debby

The Know-How Manager

“It's really all about what do you know and how do you know it. Because if I can't drive a truck, if I can't get behind the line when things are starting to fall apart, if I can't tell a server to serve from one side or the other, or if we're really in a desperate situation to put on whites and start plating, if I can't do that my degree is meaningless. No one is going to listen to what I have to say because I can't contribute to the process, because at the end of the day, it's food on plates. But at the same time, people respect my education because I'm able to take the tools that I know and give them to people so that we can start to save money and food costs.”

Debby is general manager of a boutique catering company. Sxe is a lighter-skinned womyn 35-39 years of age, who holds both a bachelor’s and an MBA, and earns between $150,000 and $199,999 a year. After a brief stint on Wall Street, some soul-searching, and some good luck, Debby merged her finance and hospitality interests into her current career. An important key to her career development was a mentor who sought her out and helped her transition into the food and beverage business. Debby is proud of the fact that sxe put technical and fiscal practices in place that “help[ed] streamline and unify” an organization “that was pretty much all over the place.” Sxe was given the opportunity to pursue other areas and move up in the company until sxe reached a point where sxe began to plateau. Debby says sxe ultimately reached a point at the company where sxe felt “stuck.” Her mentor had left the organization, and sxe adds, moreover, “I wasn't supported creatively, I wasn't supported financially, and I wasn't supported in a career way.”
Debby explains that the lack of fiscal support was two-fold and affected both the level of resources her company was willing to invest in critical improvements and her compensation. “I'm speaking from both, the project funding as well as financially,” Debby says.

They would come up with new hurdles for me to reach bonuses that didn't really relate to how our financials were created. Time and time again I was underpaid in terms of my annual bonus, and I didn't get the raises that I was promised….I would have to justify my existence, what I was doing and what I was producing over and over again whether it was for a project or for a raise. It just got to be very clear that there was a big stall in place.

Moreover, Debby states, “my race and gender had everything to do with the logistics.” “The fact that everybody I had to ask approval from was all white male and Italian” was a problem.

They were senior VP's and presidents and CEO's. There were no womyn, no one of color, male or femyle. So it was very clear that those people who were promoted were White and male, sometimes even younger, many of whom had less education and less experience. And it just was a fact.

Debby comments,

I think people feel comfortable, especially in food and beverage, around people that they are most comfortable with, who are most like them, especially when you're talking about a hospitality, restaurant kind of experience where a lot of people are a little leery of people with an education. They're more comfortable with people who have sort of come up through the trenches kind of thing. So I
think that is one thing. I think it's only natural, especially if you have a senior management who never went to college, who never went to business school, who never was really trained in how to be managers, and they're managing a multi-million-dollar division because they've just been with the company forever and they have 'earned' that division. They have the tools that they have, and for better or for worse, they promote and manage the best that they know how.

I think from a personal perspective they liked me, but from a professional perspective they didn't necessarily want to fight or support or defend me. My mentor was [of a different national origin] and younger and had a bigger vision about what was possible creatively and a teamwork environment, a totally different perspective. So he also faced extraordinary resistance as a senior vice president because he just had a different point of view. So he didn't succeed either. He ended up leaving and doing his own business. But I just think it was the nature of the company and the management style.

While Debby believes her level of educational attainment is equal to or greater than most people in her position, sxe implies that it garners little value or deference on its own. “It's really all about what do you know and how do you know it,” sxe shares.

Because if I can't drive a truck, if I can't get behind the line when things are starting to fall apart, if I can't tell a server to serve from one side or the other, or if we're really in a desperate situation to put on whites and start plating, if I can't do that my degree is meaningless. No one is going to listen to what I have to say because I can't contribute to the process….At the end of the day, it's food on plates.
“At the same time,” Debby adds, “people respect my education because I'm able to take the tools that I know and give them to people so that we can start to save money and food costs.”

Regarding race and gender, Debby divulges that it is more challenging to deal with being femyle. “[Whether] it's finance or food or whatever…at the end of the day,” sxe remarks,

Your senior managers are mostly male. It doesn't really matter what your race is; there's just certain male bonding that occurs that you're just not a part of. Then the more blue-collar the work environment is, the more that actually becomes a factor.

Debby states “there was definitely a glass ceiling” at one of the companies for which sxe worked.

There was no femyle who was over vice president, and they were White womyn. There was [a] womyn of Indian descent…., and sxe was an assistant V.P. They wouldn't even make her a full V.P. The womyn were the ones who ended up having to not only do their jobs but be forced to do some mentorship that the men didn't want to do. They were forced to do a little more event planning than the men were asked to do, event planning meaning planning the corporate parties or some recruiting events or whatever, and they were the vice president of sales, vice president of whatever. There was definitely more of an administrative push on the femyle executives. Even the marketing V.P. had to fight for her budget or for support or for an office. The femyle V.P.'s didn't have offices but all the men did.
Debby says “being femyle was more difficult” in part because “it was condescending sometimes. Some of the conversations you had to sort of fight through just to be heard, but sometimes you would just bite the bullet because you knew it would get you through.”

Even in my current position, I get challenged by young guys all the time, and it's really irritating because they just feel like they can do it because I'm a womyn. If I were a man, all I'd have to do is say something and it wouldn't be challenged whether or not what came out of my mouth was relevant.

Regarding the issue of complexion, Debby comments “I think it's played a major part in my career, because it's all about acceptability.” As a lighter-skinned Black person, sxe believes “there's this whole concept of the exception versus the rule, that if you're in an environment long enough people will let you know that they think you're different.” Debby feels that this is particularly true “if you're good, especially if you know what you're talking about and you're focused.” Implies that sxe is quite conscious of her corporate racial disposition, Debby says sxe tries “very hard to not push [her] race identity” because sxe knows who sxe is. “I'm not confused about who I am [and] I don't walk around [being militant].”

But I know that because I could be Dominican or I could be Haitian, or I could be whatever, that even from my line cooks' perspective, when they see me, there's a sense of identity and identification and acceptance and pride that helps. It's just a fact. And for senior management, I think it's all about...I don't know if they feel threatened. I only know because of what's come back to me, not because I walk around and they talk to you about it. If you're in an environment long enough,
they'll start to tell you what they think. And [it's] not always what you want to hear.

Debby labels race- and/or complexion-related exception-to-the-rule comments as “overt and…subtle all at the same time.” Sxe provides the example of being at a social corporate function when someone literally said, “Oh, you know, you're different than them.” Another example, according to Debby, is when “people are talking about a line cook or something” who

Happen[s] to be Haitian or something, and [they’ll] have some sort of racial joke about what they look like or who they are or whatever, and totally forget[...] that they're in a room where you might take offense to it. Or senior management [may be present], and there might be some junior-level wait staff in the room, but they've never really noticed that everybody who was a waiter in the room was Black until you walked in.

Debby clearly states that sxe does not feel that sxe is fairly compensated for the work sxe does. Although sxe is general manager, sxe thinks part of the problem is that

[Her] compensation is pretty much dictated by what [sxe] ask[s] for as opposed to [the people who actually operate the company] evaluating things. So I have to dictate and negotiate and that's just...it is what it is. So if I'm not on top of it, it doesn't happen. So I'm in the process of renegotiating and creating my compensation. I'd still like ownership to take responsibility and make that happen.

Asked if sxe thought things would be different if sxe were White and male, Debby replies,
I'd probably be making more. I probably would be a little more up front about asking for what I wanted. I think the whole...it's a new state for me in terms of forcing that negotiating issue. So I just think that there are more changes just in life; you put it out there, and whatever happens, happens. That's just, I think, a function of training and experience and owning the contribution. So I would say I would definitely make more money.

Debby suggests that asking is not everything. Sxe shares the story about a position with a previous company where sxe spent months requesting a raise and a title change, but finally left after realizing that nothing would change. After submitting her resignation to a superior, Debby says sxe was “beaten up because [sxe] didn't give them an opportunity to counter.” Furthermore, sxe says the person sxe had trained to take her position was immediately given two assistants and three years later received the salary sxe had requested plus $30,000.

Debby believes that sxe is eternally fast tracked “because of the things [sxe’s] accomplished.” Sxe says,

My experience at [a major Wall Street investment firm] was sort of like a Harvard degree. No matter where I go, even though that's not something that I do or even in the same realm of reality, it's always the one thing that everybody looks at as the gold star or the blue chip on my life experience.

Debby is one of only a few respondents who feel no particular pressure about attire. “Oh, it doesn't matter what I wear unless I'm going out to an event,” sxe says.
I'm usually on the casual side of things, but if I'm going to see a client or have a client meeting or whatever, I'll do the suit thing or get dressed up. But to do what I do in my office, I don't need to look a particular way.

While Debby does “the suit thing” “if [sxe’s] going to see a client or have a client meeting or whatever,” “for the most part, [sxe] wear[s] whatever.”

In terms of improving the status of Blacks in the industry, Debby feels there should be “more promotion in the strategic positions,” and that companies should figure out how to identify talent and support that talent so that there's more representation at the top in more strategic positions. I think that's a concerted effort that has to be made from the owner's perspective….If it's not, then the initiative and the language is irrelevant. I think it makes a difference for the morale of the staff because…all hospitality environments are really built on a pyramid of education, of ethnicity, diversity or whatever. So at the line level, whether it's hotel or restaurant or catering, you have most of your language, education, cultural, nationality, all of it as diverse as one could possibly think. Then the more you start going up to the pyramid of ownership and executive representation, it's very different. Just having the one or two people in key decision-making positions represent that group is incredibly motivating and creates an environment that allows people to feel that their values and that they have an opportunity to grow within the organization.

While Debby believes that outside networking can be vital, sxe also thinks internal sponsorship is very important. And where the sponsor or mentor is concerned, sxe feels strongly that
It's more than support. It's taking on what it is that you want to do and owning it as [your] own agenda. So there's an alliance there that's really, really key for any kind of promotion or upgrade in salary or sponsorship, of project initiative or funding, or whatever.

Another issue that Debby addresses is attractiveness. Sxe points out that “being perceived as attractive can be a detriment when it comes to managing a big group of men.” “I either dress up or dress down depending on who I'm managing and how I need to be heard, so that distraction is [as minimal] as possible,” says Debby.

I tend to play down myself as much as possible unless it's a really high-end event where aesthetics are key [and] you have stars and models and all that kind of stuff walking in the door and they want to feel like you represent their image kind of thing. But when it comes to managing people in the kitchen and the line stuff and that kind of thing, I definitely have gone in the opposite direction.

Finally, Debby believes more Black enterprise is needed in the hospitality industry. “I know it's more than it used to be, but I think that the more we take on the ownership of these things, the more we're likely to impact the industry as a whole.” Debby also thinks that

The more [successful Black managers] reach out to support younger, new executives or people that we know in the industry who are trying to start out, or the more we reach out to [the] community and represent our industry at cross-industry forums, whether it's college fairs or career fairs or going into high schools or whatever, to give the face of hospitality a different perspective, so
those people have an idea of what is possible as opposed to their corner deli or the
front desk guy or whatever, [the better].

Now that I have introduced the cast of research characters via individual narrative
descriptions, the next chapter will discuss the major and minor themes that emerged from
an intensive analysis of the in-depth interview data.
CHAPTER 5
DATA THEMES

This chapter outlines the 30 major and minor concepts that surfaced from the open, axial, and selective coding of the 20 participant interviews. While steeped in the field notes and transcripts, many of the categories, subcategories, and codes that emerged were related to the literature review and the seven pre-data collection assumptions with which this study began (See Figure 1). To encourage conversation around the aforementioned subject areas and to spur commentary about issues of importance to the research population, various questions were used as guides, where necessary (See Figure 2).

Based in large part on the literature review, questions were routinely asked about colorism or the perceived impact of skin complexion as well as work attire and highly successful Blacks. Questions about the role of mentorship and whether participants felt they had ever been fast tracked emerged from the very first interview and were included in subsequent conversations. The importance of personal responsibility on the part those desiring to ascend the corporate ladder also arose early in analysis and became a regular topic of investigation. As well, questions about family, religion, marital status, geographic origin, and age were also commonly worked into the conversations. And common closings revolved around participants’ suggestions for growing the ranks of Blacks in high-level hospitality positions, and whether they had anything else to add.

While regularly addressing most of the questions presented above rendered the conversations at least semi-structured, it is important to note that questions were not always posed in the same order or asked in exactly the same way. Every attempt was made to get a feel for each participant, allow her or him to share what was personally
most important, and present areas of interest in ways that made sense in the contexts of individual conversations.

An in-depth analysis of the 20 study participant transcripts resulted in 5,337 coding incidents, or coins, and yielded 30 subcategories or factors illustrative of the research population’s experience (See Table 7), which later morphed into four main and two minor categories (See Table 8). While explanatory transcript examples for all 30 subcategories comprise this section of the text, extensive attention is given to the first four, while treatment of the other 26 is more cursory.

Relationships

A total of 788 coins were assigned to the category Relationships. The Relationships category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: assistance, board service, comfortability, corporate culture, corporate politics, divorce, familiarity, family, golf, humyn nature, legacy, likability, mentorship/sponsorship, networks/networking, ownership, reaching back, reciprocity, role modeling, teaching, trust, uncomfortability, and work life balance.

Many of the participants commented on the pre-data collection assumption that relationships with White counterparts are strained or at lower levels than with other high-level Blacks and there is both an ongoing internal and received awareness of their Blackness. There were two strains of feedback. One expressed the reality and importance of positive relationships, especially with key White colleagues, while the other revealed a persistent perception of Blackness in the workplace as different and pejorative.

Mentorship was one place where helpful relationships between Black and White colleagues emerged. Penny says, for example, “I was fortunate that I had people giving
Ronny talks about benefiting from relationships with White mentors “six or eight times” in his career. Joeey considers himself “fortunate [to have] had great teachers that are professionals in the field” and “blessed with people in [his] life that have influence to be able to make decisions that have gotten [him] further in [his] career.” Nelly’s overall perception of her organization is good. She says, “I’ve been with the same company for 20 years. I know a lot of people, so I’ve got a lot of great relationships.”

Nelly provides the example of discussing the controversial O.J. Simpson verdict with some of her White colleagues. And while her perspective was different from theirs, she says “having the kind of relationships with people where you can get into those kinds of conversations matters. And not in every environment you can.” Nelly also acknowledges that there have been “some White men who played very critical roles [in my career] who believed in me more than I believed in myself.”

Betty speaks about good personal relationships that have been built over the course of years. While she feels that such connections are important in life, in general, she also believes they can be critical in business. Although she is delighted that many hotel companies now use standardized metrics to evaluate performance, for example, she says,

Sometimes metrics can be skewed. And that’s when your relationship comes in so people can trust you when you have to explain something that doesn’t look positive. They trust you because of your performance and your ability to be able to clarify what’s truly going on.

Although Harry only recalls “one serious mentor,” who happened to be a White male, he attributes a lot of his career progression to “making relationships” with a lot of
different people and “go[ing] from there.” These relationships have resulted in nominations to serve on a number of boards in a range of service capacities that have enabled him to interface with a host of peers in other organizations and expand his sphere of influence.

For Perry, mentorship is an important part of what relationships with White colleagues are all about. He remarks,

As an African-American I’ve absolutely benefited from [mentorship]. I’ve had…some great mentors—folks I felt that I could go to. And not one of them was a minority. Not one of them was a person of color. They were White male or White femyle.

Penny also spoke about gender and developing connections with womyn in addition to men. Sxe says, “[In] the last two or three years, I’ve developed some very good femyle relationships with some mentors that are currently general managers or managing directors of their properties. But when I first started out, it was definitely males.” Penny went on to explain that the emphasis on males, and White males, in particular, was simply a function of them most commonly being in the higher positions.

Nelly suggests that while you can have wonderful relationships with White mentors and colleagues, there is great potential for misunderstanding and injured feelings.

As powerful as some of these folks have been in my life, they’ve also provided the most significant disappointments. I remember people who I value so tremendously have a conversation, and they’d say something [and not even realize what they just said]….whether it was racially insensitive and they wouldn’t know it or a gender specific issue and they wouldn’t understand how it was landing for
me. But I can have those kinds of interactions with them….We’ve become as a family. The people that you love the most hurt you the most. But you sort of rebound and realize, well, we’re a family. They’re not perfect, nor am I. And you go work through it with them.

On the negative side, Joeey says he believes “75, 80% [of White people in corporate America] are uncomfortable” around Black co-workers. He explains that he does things differently because of White people’s perceptions.

It’s always been a situation where, and I this I think will be true forever, I have to do things and approach things in a different way to get what I want mainly because the assumption is going to be that I probably shouldn’t be where I am….Basic things that other people would assume that…a general person in my role would have—the skill set, the qualities that person would have….They’re going to wait for me to open my mouth and see how I do things before they will say, “Oh, ok, he’s fine.”…And I’m not saying that’s [true] in all cases. But it’s definitely been the case probably more than it needs to be.

Nelly talks about the omnipresence of difference and her constant consideration for how that difference is perceived.

I’m extremely aware that how you show up…I’m never unaware that I’m a minority womyn. So that lens is on everything that I do….I’m unable to switch it off.

Joeey discusses the difference that he feels and the extra precautions he takes because of his race.
I am very aware of how I comport myself on a day-to-day basis in my role because if I screw up, there probably won’t be another me….From how I talk to the decisions I make to where I go to what I do to who I keep company with to who I’m speaking to at the time [and] how I speak to them, I’m very cognizant of the people around me and how I’m being…viewed at all times.

Joeey explains that his interactions with Whites in the corporate space are contextual. It depends on what type of relationship I have. If this is the first time I’m meeting with the person, then there are certain parameters I’m probably going to have to try to get across based on how I read them, how I read their body language, how they’re coming across to me as far as how much I have to go in that role.

Wading through these kinds of stereotypical perceptions and having to work in this manner obviously makes it challenging to maintain relationships with White colleagues that are equal in authenticity and intensity to those with other Blacks. The comfortability with other Blacks may be related to the feeling that one can communicate in a more relaxed fashion. Joeey’s comments below make this point poignantly.

Of course the communication style is going to change based on who I’m speaking to because, at the end of the day, my goal is to be understood in the most efficient and best way possible. So, there’s a certain vernacular that I might use with people that are like me that look like me that I wouldn’t use in front of my boss. Now I can go have a conversation with [a superior Black colleague] and use that vernacular. And even at her vice president level, sxe understands what I’m talking about. And there’s a certain amount of comfort in that.
Nelly expresses some of the same sort of reassurance and ease when sxe spends time outside of the workplace with some of her Black colleagues.

I have the kind of relationship with some of the minorities on my team that [my] White counterparts have enjoyed for…years. And so now I understand, where I didn’t before, what it’s like to have people subordinate to you who probably are your sisters—your sister girls. So [my White counterparts] think, “Wow, you have a great relationship with X!” But they don’t recognize that they’ve had the exact same relationship….We just never had it with them because there were never us in senior positions….We have relationships now where people [might ask], “Oh, my gosh, you know Nelly?”…And what they don’t know is that they were out at my house on Saturday…eating gumbo.

Perry’s experience has also been dichotomous. While he has essentially been treated fine in the workplace, he has “certainly recognized throughout the years” that he does not “have the same relationship with [his] peers as they have with each other.” Perry ascribes this difference largely to varying social experiences outside the office. He explains,

[There're] certain things I don’t do. I don’t get the invites, [and] I guess I’ve learned to just move on….From the social side, the camaraderie side, the teambuilding side, the stuff that you do outside of work, I feel more aware that I’m Black there because I don’t golf, I don’t hunt, I don’t do the things that we as males for the most part in this industry kind of bond around.

Terry talks about a relationship he has with a White colleague that he went to college with, but who ended up interviewing him and becoming his superior later in his career.
He's been gone from the company now three years, but we still keep in touch.
And when he hears of stuff going on in the industry, he'll call me and ask my
opinion, get my opinion, (or) tell me what he thinks. Or if he hears something on
the street, he'll call me and give me a heads up. And, we play golf together
probably twice a month. I don't know if you would call that a mentorship because,
like I said, he's had more exposure to lots of things….He's shared certain things
and has gotten me involved in some of the other industry organizations.

Although Patty works in a predominantly minority context, sxe, like Terry, has White
colleagues outside of her company to whom sxe can turn for various kinds of support.
Since sxe sees herself as a mentor to a number of people within and without her own
organization, Patty clearly distinguishes this mentorship from the reciprocal assistance
sxe engages in with some of her White friends.

I would not count any of them as my mentor. They just helped me….I've got
people…but that I can just call or email and say, ‘I need help on this.’ I have a girl in
California; I'm saying girl, but sxe's a womyn. Sxe does a lot of writing, and
anything I ask her about writing, sxe shares with me books, articles that sxe's paid
for. I can ask her any kind of question. If sxe thinks there's a webinar or
something that I need to see, sxe emails it to me, and I do the same for her. Or, if
somebody asks me about writing an article, I'll email her, ‘Oh ABC magazine is
paying X amount of dollars for an article.’ Sxe'll do the same for me—just to give
freely, expect nothing in return….I met her at MPI or something years ago, and
sxe's the best one that I know who would do that; but a lot of people do that.
Larry feels that mentorship and sponsorship have been vital to his professional and career development. While he indicates that these are two-way processes, he insists that these indispensable relationships are precipitated by aspirant diligence and excellence. Larry notes that his work ethic and outcomes have spurred advancement as superiors have concluded that he’s capable and worthy of their confidence. He submits, however,

[That] would have never happened to me…[without] having somebody to pull your coattail and guide you along. I mean, that’s certainly been key in my career….I got a mentor by…busting my butt early on, standing out, somebody taking an interest in me, building some…relationships, and it sort of flourished. But it all begins with…hard work, preparation, sacrifice.

Tammy also emphasizes the importance of working incredibly hard and forgoing some freedoms and pleasures early on to build a successful and enduring career.

I don’t even know who raised my last child! You know, all those 16-hour days of work, learned all I could, remained a student to really understand our business, took opportunities most people would be afraid to take, was really fearless about wanting to grow my career really quickly….The best thing is that I had a general manager that saw that at the time and knew what was happening in our environment from a diversity standpoint that said, ‘We need senior Black leaders in our company.’ In fact, we have a diverse company, a diverse hotel with 50% of our associates being of color and non-Caucasian. You have to make sure we have leaders that can inspire them to do more….So that being said, as he’s watching me grow in the company, he’s sort of molding me to go to be a general manager. So I probably went through departments faster than other folks.
Like Larry and Tammy, Lenny acknowledges the significant role White sponsorship has played in shaping his vocational progression. Interestingly, he links this willingness to support with a certain kind of boss.

I've...been fast-tracked, probably two or three times..., where I've gotten...that diverse boss, who understands that it's not about color; it's about business. And, they've done some things...to get me moved along further and said, 'Why are you just doing this?', or 'Why are you just doing that?', and have given me the opportunity to expand my job responsibilities to prepare me for other things.

Just as relationships can be beneficial in helping one progress in the hospitality industry, Barry discusses how the lack of familiarity can be detrimental. He says that although he has applied for a few higher level positions in his field for which he is well qualified, he has not gotten the jobs.

I'm not going to sit here and say it's because of my race, but I will say that I think it's a comfort level for folks, and especially – you're talking about the tourism leader for a destination. This is your person, this is the face of your destination, this is the guy who's going to lead it, and you've got a lot of folks in those communities that may not just be comfortable with the idea.

Tommy shares a story about a well-intentioned company mentoring program, which illustrates how a less than optimal interaction can cause more harm than the absence of mentorship and questions whether mentoring relationships should be formalized in the first place.

In the mid ‘90s..., I was matched with the senior vice president, right, and he was going to mentor me. And it was the most worthless, superficial, non-authentic
relationship I ever – it was a joke. It was almost like he felt like, ‘Okay, this guy is going to expect me to give him a job.’ I mean, he didn’t say that, but that’s kind of how I felt. So it wasn’t a mentor like, ‘Okay, so tell me about yourself. Yeah, okay. So what do you think you need to work on in order to get this next job?’ ‘Well I think I need to work on XYZ.’ ‘Okay. Well your next performance appraisal, kind of share that with me.’ It was so distant and so – it was a waste of time….There was no real mentoring. There was no, ‘Well tell me about – let me share with you how I had difficulty in this particular area and kind of how I navigated through that.’ It was a joke.

And so we went away from that….It was a formalized program we were at; but it just didn’t work, so they disbanded it. And partially why they disbanded it was because what they were getting from non people of color [was], ‘Oh, must be nice. Boy, I’d love to have a mentor too at a senior level,’ and so they disbanded it. And quite frankly, it was a joke.

And so really what you find now is there is more informal mentoring amongst ourselves. Some of us have Caucasian mentors and I would tell you that I have a couple, you know. I don’t formally say, ‘Hey, you’re my mentor,’ but we have a relationship such that I can call them and bounce things off of them. But the one…official mentor program that I was involved in, it was a disaster.

Although he enjoys the benefits of both, Vinny is keen to point out the difference between mentors and sponsors, since his primary mentor played a critical role during a difficult time in his personal life.
I've got lots of sponsors, but my mentor is the one who rolled up her sleeves and said, you know what, you're not giving up—because my divorce was devastating. Sponsors are those who align themselves with you where you represent what it is they are trying to accomplish. In general conversation, you know, ‘I like that guy Vinny, he's pretty sharp,’ right? Or, ‘Is there anything we can do to make sure Vinny stays with us?’ Sponsors are those who are looking out for their interests as well. A mentor is a person who tells you the hard, cold facts.

Debby, too, values strong organizational relationships, but draws a clear distinction between mentorship and sponsorship.

[Sponsorship is] more than support. It's taking on what it is that you want to do and owning it as their own agenda. So there's an alliance there that's really, really key for any kind of promotion or upgrade in salary or sponsorship of project initiative or funding, or whatever.

Mentorship is different. It's somebody who listens to you objectively, who helps give you some ideas and helps you formulate your own thoughts, more like a guidance counselor of sorts, not making introductions.

Danny’s aforementioned comments regarding both corporate culture and racial politics highlight the complexity, importance, and consequences of interpersonal office relationships for Black managerial aspirant’s overall well-being. While he states that either is difficult to deal with individually, Danny argues that a mixture of the two is most troubling for minority professionals.

As an advocate and veteran of multiple corporate diversity initiatives, Taffy points out that relationships are not always fairly and equitably established, in part because there
are subconscious processes at work. While sxe recognizes the benefits of strong interpersonal relationships, Taffy argues that clear inducements are needed for people to do the right thing since folks are naturally partial to those most like themselves.

Kelly reveals that the extensive alumni network of the first-rate university sxe attended has tremendously benefited her career. Amplifying the point that persons with things in common are likely to support each other, Kelly looks forward to a time when more Blacks are in a position to help those who follow in their footsteps.

I think…my experience at [my alma mater] has probably been the most eye-opening….It's not so much that other African-Americans and other minorities aren't talented. It really is holistically nepotistic in so many regards; I mean, in who you know. I am confident that a lot of the conversations that I had early on in my career were because I can pick up the phone from [my alma mater’s] network and go, ‘Hey.’….So, [there’re] just not enough of us….I love it when people call me, because I also know I'm the only one around for a while, right?

So, the new African-Americans don't have a lot of other people to look up to and do that for; so yes, call me. So, until that happens, and more of us can – ‘I've got a name I can forward,’ ‘I have this.’ And I do that all the time when people, headhunters call….When our network is larger, it helps….I know of a couple more people, but…I don't have a sister girl group of hospitality or casino executives that I can call.

Benny’s comments regarding relationships are also forward-thinking. He sees open-mindedness and true organizational diversity as excellent strategies for building the kind of relationships that can benefit hospitality companies.
People just need to open up their world to those different than them. You know, this is a diversity issue…beyond race and gender and…around experiences and backgrounds…Business is just a natural tendency to migrate toward those who have similar likes as you, similar beliefs as you, and the like….That’s…how I look at it. I think we need to…go to different places to find talent instead of going to the same places.

While interracial workplace relationship strain repeatedly surfaced as real, respondents reveal that they maintain positive and enduring relationships with many of the Whites with whom they work. And since White males dominate executive administration, relationships with them are commonly described as fundamentally critical to Black managerial success.

**Discrimination**

A total of 735 coins were assigned to the category *Discrimination*. The *Discrimination* category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: advantage-White, annoyance, bias, challenges, color time , different treatment, difficulty, disadvantage, discrimination, double standard, golf, humyn nature, limitations, male domination, obviations, pecking orders, pigeon-holing, powerlessness, prejudice, pressure, privilege, proving, questioning, racism, role playing, rules-different/unspoken, separation, sexism, shock, stereotypes/stereotyping, surprise, testing, threatening, twice as good, unfair/unequal treatment, unfairness, and unintentional/non-malicious.

Concerning discrimination and the notion that highly-compensated Blacks have not been treated completely equitably and fairly over the course of their employment, Lenny
shares the story of a boss who went to extraordinary lengths to point out and have him remedy minor on-the-job mistakes.

Quite a few years back when I was in the kitchen, I had a chef that…I used to close at night…in this particular hotel for….And…if I didn’t close correctly, he would actually call me at six or seven in the morning after I’d just left at two o’clock to come back to the hotel to do something that I’d forgotten to do—whether it was lock down a refrigerator or cover something that I’d just missed or something like that. Whereas others that missed things or didn’t do those things, he would just say, ‘Hey, next time make sure you look at this,’ or ‘I found this, make sure you check on it [next time]’ or whatever. But I actually had to come back to the building and…do whatever I had missed…. [It was] unbelievable.

Another dramatic incident of mistreatment is the time when Lenny’s superior and colleagues specifically asked him not to attend a business meeting with the ownership of a property, although he was “the number three [person] in charge” of the leadership team. Because the owner was “not great with diversity” and “it just wouldn’t sit well,” he was expected to understand and accommodate their request. His superiors tried to smooth the situation by explaining, “We’re just trying to protect you.” Lenny also says he has been in a meeting where the owner of a hotel said, “We’ve got too many people that look like you, and we need to go the other way.”

In the words of Larry, perhaps a classic recurring case of perceived maltreatment is not having

The luxury of…second chances [even though one is able to] look around…and see [White] people of average productivity [who] hang in there. They’re still
around. There’s no room for being mediocre as a diverse manager or a diverse executive. It’s just not going to happen…If you find yourself sort of drifting toward mediocrity, you will find yourself at the door fairly quickly.

Penny echoes Larry’s sentiment.

I work harder, and I think that I’m probably allowed fewer mistakes. And I don’t know if that’s self-induced or if it’s the culture. But, yeah, there’ve been times that you hear stories about other general managers, and you think, how do people get away with something like that?….I do feel as though the option of failure is just not there….I feel like if I were to fail or I were to do something that isn’t becoming or what have you or it’s an ethical issue…the next time that having an African-American femyle general manager comes up, they would be judged by what I did. And I wouldn’t necessarily say that White people have the same challenge….I don’t think that that is in the forefront of their minds, nor do I feel like they’re lumped together as we are. For whatever reason….I think that they’re given a little bit more leniency.

An interesting point about different treatment that Betty makes is that

It’s…expected. Throughout one’s life you’ve always been taught that you’re going to be treated differently because people will look at you and have a stereotype that you have to overcome and that’s inherent….When someone looks at me, you know what, they may see an African-American womyn. And a lot of times the first thing they may say [is] ‘Do you work in sales?’ or ‘What is your role?’ When I tell them I’m the general manager, that’s surprising to them because most GMs don’t look like me.
Several respondents share stories about customers, colleagues, and others who either after having no prior contact with them or just having interacted with them via e-mail or phone being surprised and/or treating them differently. Terry sees this as workplace prejudice and explains,

People have their predispositions about other people, even sight unseen….Sometimes people don't know who they're going to be meeting with and you can just – I've been in situations where I've been corresponding with people over the phone, or…email, or written letters and whatnot. And…when I come down to greet them…and call them by name, they'll be, ‘No, we're looking for Terry Miles.’ And, I'm, ‘But I am.’ So….you're already a little bit off-balance just going into the site visit or…whatever meeting you're going into with them, because you're not what they were expecting.

According to Perry this racial surprise is not limited to White people,

The initial response [from Whites] is one of ‘Oh!,’ ‘Wow!’ I mean, absolutely, that happens. And what I enjoy the most is when I get African-American employees or hourly employees to come to me and say, ‘You know what, we were shocked. We were surprised’…I get a lot of that. ‘We were shocked when we saw you. You’re not what we expected.’….You do not look like what we’re used to is what they’re really saying.

Finally, regarding surprise encounters, Penny says that gender has always been a more problematic issue than race when engaging with customers.

As a femyle and African-American, at times from a guest perspective, it can be challenging….I say that because depending on the market that you’re in and
depending on the city and depending on your client and what they’re used to and their point of reference, some have difficulty understanding and believing that there is a womyn in charge.

And so often I have people who call the office and I may answer my own line and they’ll say, ‘Oh, is the general manager there?’….They’ve automatically made the assumption there is no way that I could be the general manager because I’m a femyle. And I can only assume that it’s because I’m a femyle because of my voice over the phone. I don’t know that I can pinpoint that to say African-American but definitely as a femyle.

And I also get it in person where someone will say, ‘Oh, so you’re the general manager,’ and they’re almost surprised. Now whether they’re surprised because I’m African-American or…because I’m a femyle, I don’t know. But I do know that they would not have said that to me if I were a male. That’s for sure. So from that at least in my career from a guest standpoint I’ve gotten more resistance or push or not as much respect as my male counterparts would have or White male counterparts would have in the same situation.

While Tammy, too, shares concern about incredulity and on-the-job gender inequality where servicing hotel guests is concerned, sxe also reveals past problems with male colleagues. Tammy expresses, however, that her biggest pet peeve is when people attempt to talk around her.

I’ve had experiences where a customer just can’t believe that I’m the general manager….I’ve had managers that don’t have an appreciation for diversity say things that are negative. For instance, when I was in California I wore my hair in
braids, and [a male superior] told me I would never be a general manager as long as I looked the way I did. He wasn’t a senior manager; but, from a position standpoint, he was higher up than I was. I’ve had instances where people talk around you. That to me is the worst…because I’m standing there as a Black womyn and you’re thinking that because I’m standing by a White male he has greater authority or power over me or he’s in a…higher ranking position because in your mind you can’t see me in that role.

After sharing a story about her professional career stalling at a particular point and to the question of whether race had significantly impacted her experience, Debby reveals Race and gender had everything to do with the logistics….The fact [was] that everybody I had to ask approval from was…White male and Italian. They were senior VP's and presidents and CEO's. There were no womyn, no one of color, male or femyle….It was…clear that those…who were promoted were White and male, sometimes even younger, many [with] less education and less experience. White privilege and male dominance along with the consequent Black disadvantage and femyle subordination constrained Debby in ways that were professionally unhealthy and unhelpful.

Reflecting the prevalence of guest-based workplace discrimination, Taffy makes it clear that her race- and gender-based concerns are not merely about an isolated incident nor does sxe perceive them as especially unique. In fact, sxe declares,

With customers, unfortunately, it has happened more often or [on] more than one occasion….I’ve worked in properties [where either in] staffing or management [I was] one of the few African-American womyn [and] have been called upon by
guests and then questioned, ‘And you are who? No, you don’t understand, I asked to speak to the manager.’ …I think every African-American general manager has experienced that.

Beating the discrimination frequency drum more loudly than Taffy, Benny maintains, I encounter some form of discrimination daily….Some cases it’s blatant, and some cases it’s just pure ignorance….I’ve never really…sat and thought about how it has either been a hindrance to me or actually in some cases been a help…I don’t know. That’s a tough question.

One of the things I will tell you is there are times when it’s obvious that people are not comfortable dealing with someone with my physical attributes as well as professional attributes or accolades…When I say physical, [I mean] me being a Black person in my current industry—so, race.

Tommy proves that racial discrimination on the job is not simply a Black and White issue. Indeed, it was an unexpectedly brief interaction with a Latino interviewer and the unsatisfactory corporate follow up that caused him racial discomfort.

All the folks from [my company] called me and [said], ‘Man, you’re the number one candidate. You’re our guy for this job. Boy you really hit the ball out of the park. Everybody is impressed with you, dah, dah, dah. We just need you to go down there; it’s a formality, meet with the owner.’ And the owner had only seen my resume and so forth and even made the comment, ‘Boy, we’re so lucky to get a person with his experience and his background.’

So everybody was all excited, right?…I got to the interview, the interview lasted maximum five minutes, and I felt it; it was [awkward]. [When] I walked
into the room, I don’t think he [even] extended to shake my hand—and this is only three years ago!...And I said, ‘Okay, this ain’t going right.’ …The questions were like, ‘So have you ever lived in Miami?’ ‘Oh, no.’ ‘You have family in Miami. Oh, okay’—just really nonsensical questions that had nothing to do with the job. And so that charade went on for about five minutes, and then he said, ‘Okay, we’ll be in touch.’ So I clearly walked away saying, ‘Okay, he didn’t know I was Black, and he’s got a problem with it.’

So I called all the [company] folks and said, ‘I don’t feel good about this.’ And I didn’t tell them why, and they went, ‘Oh no, I’m sure.’ And I said, ‘No, no, something is not right here, but I’ll wait to see what he says.’ So I got back and here’s what the corporate response was, ‘[We’re] looking for somebody who has got a little more experience with boutique hotels.’ That was the response.

But prior to that I was the man; they saw all my experience on paper. So I said, ‘Oh, so that’s it.’ And so I just couldn’t take it any more, and I said, ‘Okay, well let me tell you what I think it is,’ and I told them. I said, ‘I knew from the minute I walked through the door that one, he had no idea I was Black.’ And I try to strategically put things on my resume so that you know I am Black because [I try] to avoid that kind of shit, excuse my expression. And so I said, ‘You know I thought I was fairly clear that I was African-American based on my resume.’ And I said, ‘So that’s what I think it is. Whatever the word is, whatever he told you, whatever you’re telling me; I’m telling you what it was.’

So then everybody got nervous, right?...‘Oh boy, what is Tommy going to do,’ blah, blah, blah. You know, the phone calls from humyn resource vice presidents,
‘Hey, hey, just want to check in with you and make sure you’re fine.’ I said,

‘Look I’m fine. If you’re wondering whether I’m going to do something crazy, no, I’m over it; I’m done. This happens to be—this is my world; this is the world I live in. So, no, I’m not surprised. No, I’m not pissed off. So relax.’ And it was like shock waves through the company. Everybody was so worried about me [or]…more importantly worried about what I would do.

Ronny has a lot to say regarding workplace discrimination and being treated differently at times because of his racial background.

I know of at least one instance where an employer told me I did not get [a] job because the company that I was applying for was not ready to have a Black general manager. I was clearly the best qualified; but being in the private club kind of scenario, they weren’t ready to have a Black man running their operation and he actually told me that. So I’m sure there have been other instances where I didn’t get opportunities because that was the case, but I also believe that I got other opportunities purely because I was the best-qualified….And as most of us in the Black community know…it’s the old saying that you have to be twice as good, etc., etc…and you work twice as hard and you’re twice as prepared. Well sooner or later those things pay of, and for me…I think they have paid off in past instances. But I can also point to equally as many if not more opportunities that I think I did not get or that were delayed or that didn’t come to me in a timely fashion because people had exception about my qualifications based on race or my cultural background.

‘We’re not sure we can put a Black guy on that account. We’re not sure that the client will take that. We’re not sure if he speaks well enough,’ blah, blah, blah.
Joeey suggests that pervasive prejudice, racial misperceptions, and related fear require him to continually and deliberately act in ways that do not intimidate Whites.

I'm conscious of…who I am, how I present myself and things. So I go out of my way to be non-threatening….What I look like, what people are expecting of me or from me….So, I think that it's extremely important to come across as non-threatening, and it's hard….The fear is, okay, what is going to cause this person to go off?...[The thinking is] I can't afford to have this angry person in my midst, so I want somebody that's non-threatening.

Now, non-threatening doesn't mean that you don't set expectations. Non-threatening doesn't mean that you can't be firm, and you can't drill your point across. But, it just means, in my role, I can't be Malcolm X. I can't be Louis Farrakhan. I have to be Julian Bond. So, I can say what needs to be said. It's just going to be in a non-threatening way. And, from that, once you build relationships and you build trust, and people understand what your filter is, you can bring issues to the table that would not have gotten listened to before.

Although Harry currently works at an HBCU, feels he is justly dealt with, and is proud to be Black, he has suffered his fair share of disparate treatment elsewhere and believes Blacks routinely face challenges in predominantly White contexts.

I wouldn’t trade my ethnicity for anything regardless of what perceived advantages there might be….I’ve used it as a positive asset from age 10…to now. There have been a couple of occasions…where I can’t say for sure that my race prevented me…, but there are a couple that I think that was the case and if that had not been, my career would have gone in quite a different direction.
There may be other things behind the scenes that have not happened, although as I mentioned, I serve on a couple of dozen boards and they’re all voluntary. I have not been invited to serve on any paying boards in spite of my high profile within the industry, and that I have been sort of lobbying…for….There is one possibly that might come through, but…that is sort of [a] concern. I have a feeling if I were of a different hue I probably would have been invited to one of those.

Though sxe enjoys numerous authentic relationships with White counterparts and superiors, Nelly characterizes their ubiquitous double standard, prejudicial attitudes, and differential treatment as standard.

Now, I’m…smart enough to recognize that…I have a higher benchmark to execute at than others…who…may immediately have credibility, or may immediately believe their ideas are valuable who don’t have the same burden [on] themselves of failure, who may be okay with coming less prepared….I know that about people in our world, right? So given that, I understand my [kudos] have to come from my results because there’s…pressure on the other side….I often tell people, they go ‘Nelly, you are so articulate,’ and I…say to them, ‘Is it because you expected me not to be? Are you so surprised because it is so unfathomable to you that I (can) put a couple of sentences together?’…I have great relationships with people. And I often say to them, ‘So when you guys tell me I’m articulate, that doesn’t help you or me. It…actually frustrates me.’ ‘Yeah, but why, Erica?’ I said, ‘Because here’s the underlying message: you never hear White people being described as articulate. It’s because you believe they’re smart before they even start to talk. I surprise you because I actually can talk.’ But that’s not a function of
That’s a function of being in business, and it just so happens I get [that] everywhere…My fear comes from [knowing] what matters in business and [knowing] what credence people don’t automatically give me because I’m a womyn and not a man and a minority and not a non-minority.

Although Kelly repeats Nelly’s point that there are commonly different standards for Whites and Blacks in the world of work, her chief concern is its perpetual manifestation in second guessing her attitudes and actions across multiple areas. “What I say and how I say it, and how I interact, and how approachable I am, and the things that I say, and what I wear, I mean, everything is questioned.”

Betty shares a workplace discrimination story about stymied career progression and spending more time in a lower position than White and male counterparts would have.

I remember…when it came to the point that I…feel that I should have gotten that higher level promotion, breaking out from mid-manager….A general manager [told] me that I had to be patient because when, and this was years ago,…I walked into a room, what people saw was a young womyn who is attractive…and…didn’t see me as that professional leader because people have a stereotype. [He wanted] to make sure that I was overly prepared before he promoted me…because ‘that’s the way of the world.’ I respected him for saying that because that was honest. But that was also the reality of the day.

I think that maybe he was just being nice….He was saying, ‘You’re young, you’re Black, you’re femyle, and I think you’re attractive….I have to make sure that we’re overcompensating [so] you’re so prepared there’s never any issue.’

Betty powerfully asserts,
I’d rather for us to be overly prepared than…underly-prepared *(sic)* and under-prepared, and then [placed] to meet a quota or stereotype like they did years ago when they put kids in colleges that weren’t ready to be in certain schools because they wanted to have a quota system—and then we fail.

Nevertheless, this kind of color-coded, gender-based, and ageist injustice is untenable and indefensible, especially when and where it fails to address the inequitable treatment and imbalanced tenure requirements.

While acknowledging some of the potential complexities, Barry offers a solution to what he perceives as the common practice of type-casting…Black executives.

I don't like saying this because…a lot of folks…are…doing very well and they're happy. They're making lots of money…But, those folks…that are VP of multicultural, director of diversity, in my thinking, what organizations can do is make that part of someone's job title but give them…opportunities to do other aspects. If you want a director of diversity, how about just making that person director of humyn resources, and diversity will operate within that framework? But, as long as organizations continue to create these types of titles, then…what that says, [is], okay, [if] I'm not happy anymore…, I want to look at [other] organizations. They're' going to look at that [person’s resume and] say, ‘Well, it looks like this is where her or his strength is.’…I think that's a disservice…because there's so much more talent [than] just dealing with [those areas]…The main thing that the industry can do is…get rid of those titles and give these folks…more diversified job descriptions so that their skills and experience comb a…wider array of…areas which is going…to propel them to the future.
That would be my personal recommendation. Because, a couple of African-American sales managers I've had on my staff, [I’ve made sure] to get them involved in the association market so that they're not pigeonholed….We're much more talented than just being able to talk to ourselves.

As a key employee of a predominantly minority organization, Patty rarely deals with discrimination internally but says sxe occasionally faces inappropriate attitudes when dealing with external parties. Patty experiences the most difficulty with young Whites who presumptuously doubt her intelligence or instantly have low expectations of the company. “[They behave as if] you…unscrew your head and put it in a drawer at night,” sxe remarks. “But, that can be some more of that masters of the universe stuff.”

The thing that bothers Danny the most is not ignorance, the existence of prejudice, or the majority’s low expectations of Blacks but a more insidious inability or unwillingness to equate past functional excellence with proficiency in future tasks.

From Vinny’s perspective, the intercultural relations glass is half full. While he believes interracial attitudes in the workplace have clearly improved and sees himself as an effective and engaged change agent, he feels the transformation is occurring far too slowly and doubts interactions will ever be ideal. “[Things are] still very difficult today,” Vinny comments. “Change is good, but it's not coming fast enough….We…just keep chipping away at it.”

While participants perceive overt discrimination as largely defunct and subtle bias as diminishing, it still negatively affects their daily work lives. And though there is no shortage of discrimination stories, these professionals successfully navigate race and gender politics because they have been conditioned to work harder and are prepared for
different and double internal standards as well as customer or external incredulity and
disrespect. Their modus operandi is excellence and obviation. While remaining true to
themselves, HSBHTPs consciously act in ways that put patrons and peers at ease and
smooth the way for continued ascension despite persistent prejudice.

Experience

A total of 539 coins were assigned to the category *Experience*. The *Experience*
category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the
following: accountability, authority, autonomy, background-some, Black firsts, board
service, company/staff size, coordination, credentials, dues paying, experience,
experience-based industry, expertise, exposure, job evaluation, job performance, job
satisfaction, job title, leadership, loyalty, nerve center positions, opening, operations,
power, preparation, qualifications, responsibility, resume, role, sports, and work hours.

Debby raises the recurring point that although things are rapidly changing, hospitality
remains an experience-based industry “where a lot of people are a little leery of [those]
with an education [and are] more comfortable with people who have sort of come up
through the trenches.” Indeed, an analysis of participants’ commentary reveals deep
knowledge and occupational experience across a range of areas. Commonalities revolve
around respondents’ total years of hospitality experience as well as pre-hospitality work
backgrounds, tenure in specific posts, and broad expertise plus specialized competencies
in disciplines from accounting to acquisitions and project development; destination or
diversity management; education; finance; franchising; governmental, community, or
international affairs; hotel or food and beverage operations; insurance and risk
management; leadership development; marketing; sales; and training.
While the notion that high-salaried Blacks have more employment experience than their counterparts was supported by some participants, it was implicitly challenged in cases where respondents discussed being fast tracked. Ronny’s story of being denied a job simply because “the company [he] was applying for was not ready to have a Black general manager” is helpful in understanding why many believe that when Blacks finally are given certain opportunities they often have waited longer than others. Indeed, such delays can result in acquiring more skills and building more years of experience than is typically required of Whites. Ronny’s strong belief that Whites are advantaged and Blacks are disadvantaged in this area is clear in his comment that

Anybody who’s been successful who’s Black has had to climb greater hurdles….I don’t think there’s a single one of them that would say that they haven’t had to do more, go farther, go faster, play harder, stay in a position longer than they have for their White counterparts. I don’t think any of us can get past that. And if they ever have, it’s few and far between.

Concerning the negative impact of race on his career progression, Lenny says, he has had to work harder than his White peers. “I believe that a lot of promotions and a lot of things happen because of a network, which I am not a part of that network…I think that you are challenged more.” Similarly, though more complexly, Betty’s aforementioned overstay in a lower level post was rationalized in prevailing racial as well as gender stereotypes and timelines.

Harry believes Blacks often bring more to the table and urges industry to take a special look at high-level Black talent. The feedback he has received is
When you hire...African-Americans you usually get added value to what you hire for. That’s because most of us have been told you have to be twice as good to get half as far or something like that. And...many of us actually have done that. We’ve...overqualified ourselves, so to speak, in various areas....Most people of color at the higher levels bring added skills...because they have acquired extra insights and extra skills and extra qualifications because we wanted to be accepted [and] accomplished in every way.

[For example] I elected to do my master’s in finance...because, of all the areas of management that’s the one [you] either know or don’t know....In the quantitative area, debits are debits and credits are credits. And if you don’t understand that system and can’t speak that language, then you’re out to lunch....That’s one of the...things...I did to be sure...I had no weakness....And that’s served me well over the years...in that I’m not intimidated by the numbers.

In contrast Penny thinks sxe may have “jumped some steps because of the Black femyle thing.” And, of course, skipping steps usually results in less on-the-job experience than peers. While jumping steps is one thing, Penny insists that sxe works twice as hard to be where sxe is, and “I’m not here because I’m an African-American femyle. I’m here because I’m good at what I do.”

Most of the interviewees who have been fast tracked express that they, nevertheless, have earned the promotion and are fully qualified for the new opportunity. Although sxe’s “been young in every role that [sxe’s] had, for example, Nelly feels sxe works harder than others in her age group. Though sxe admits to “an unbridled fear of failure, probably to an unhealthy level,” sxe believes that sxe “deliver[s] great results,...build[s]
great teams, [and] is always going to be needed.” Similar to Penny, however, sxe feels sxe has a “higher benchmark to executive at than others who may have immediate credibility.” Perry acknowledges that “he was tracked from the very beginning” as “a minority leader they wanted to move though the ranks.” He retorts, however, “I happen to be very good at what I do. So, the fact that I’m Black is like icing on the cake.” To the point of being fully qualified, Ronny insists

“I have been fast tracked on several occasions because I was better….I don’t think there were instances where I was fast tracked because I was Black. No. [It was] because I had better education, was a better fit for the job, was aggressive when I needed to be..., and was in position. I outperformed them; it’s that simple.

Ronny goes on to suggest that even if Blacks are occasionally fast tracked, any net advantage may be offset by discrimination or unfairness in other instances.

Although Lenny has been fast tracked “two or three times in [his] career,” for example, he maintains that he has “gotten no help” at other times; and, “it’s been a long, hard road.” Lenny recalls thinking, “Do you just want me to quit? Because you’re not going to give me the opportunity, you’re not going to move me on, [and] you’re not going to let me go.” He explains, “I’ve had bosses that will hold me where I am and tell me straight out, ‘You are very good at what you do, but I need you here.’”

Respondents share that relevant work experience as opposed to college education continues to drive hospitality advancement. Participants are deeply knowledgeable in their disciplines and boast comparable years of experience across a range of business and hospitality areas. While several share stories about being bypassed by Whites when they were clearly more capable and experienced, others recount instances of being fast-tracked
primarily because of superior production and external perceptions of their managerial acumen/potential and coincidentally because of who they are.

Excellence

A total of 333 coins were assigned to the category *Excellence*. The *Excellence* category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: competence, competition, confidence, excellence, incompetence, intelligence, non-excellence, over-preparation, over-qualification, presentation-showing up, production-expectation, recognition, results, results-oriented, safety-excellence as job, satisfaction, self-confidence, success, twice as good, value, and value-creation.

Lenny explains that extraordinary excellence in terms of industry knowledge, work experience, and multidisciplinary expertise has more than compensated for his lack of a college degree and propelled him to the upper level of hospitality management.

I really believe that my experience is one thing that's overtaken the schooling...The amount of experience that I have [has] really made a big difference in me getting jobs that, quite frankly, I probably normally would not have gotten going up against someone else. The level and the size hotels that I've run...have really put me in a different echelon. And...my diverse background—having sales, having food and beverage, having rooms, and all of those different things—really sets me apart....Usually somebody's been a salesperson all their lives, or...a rooms person, or...a food and beverage person. But, you very rarely find somebody's who's spent quite a few years in each of those areas.

Penny believes excellent on-the-job performance is a wonderful way of distinguishing oneself and attracting the mentorship and support necessary for high level career
progression. Not only has this philosophy been the story of her own vocational development, but this approach inspires her to advise and sponsor today’s aspirants.

The reality is that when you see an employee…that has potential or that nugget, so to speak, that really intends to make a difference, or really take off, you’re attracted to them. And…most people find themselves wanting to do whatever they can to foster, encourage, (and) nurture that fire—whether it’s because you see some of yourself in that person or you really feel like I…want to help this person go….I think you find that when you have spark, people will come to you and say, ‘Hey, I see that you did this.’ Or, ‘You worked on that project—great work. Let me just give you a piece of advice.’

…That’s how my life worked. That’s just me; I can only speak for me. [And] when I see that in other managers or other employees I know I’m drawn to that person whether it’s in my industry or outside of my industry. I am always encouraged by young talent so I do find myself saying, ‘Hey, if you need anything, here’s my card, call me. I’d love to help you with whatever I can.’

So a lot of it, I think, is the vibe…you put out and what you offer up….If the person just comes to work, sits at their desk, does their job and goes home, people are not going to reach out to you and try and help….You can be brilliant; but, if you don’t show that enthusiasm, that zeal, you’re not going to be noticed. And then you find yourself having to seek out people and say, ‘Hey, you know, my career is not going as well as it should, can you give me some advice on it?’

Harry’s comments on this topic support Penny’s notion that professional excellence translates into positive recognition and continually generates higher level opportunity.
In business, you really can’t plot a career path…All you can do is do the job you’re doing to your best ability, and someone will say to you ‘Hey, you know, we’ve been watching you and we need someone for this, would you be interested?’…And that’s every [successful] business person….It’s always like that…—simply doing the best you can where you are and then taking advantage of an opportunity that’s presented…That’s been my pattern.

While Taffy, too, links exceptional job performance with corporate recognition, sxe counsels that both femyle and Black managers have to work harder than average.

First of all, it’s the only way you’re going to get recognized…I [believe] you have to work harder as a womyn, and…I don’t think that’s just in hospitality… [Also] I think if you interviewed any Black across the board, they would say, ‘Yeah…I felt like I worked harder.’ So I think, again, education, and I think it’s focus….You have to know your job. You have to know what you’re doing.

Although he implies that background and past preparation can provide advantages, Joeey remarks that many highly accomplished Black executives are truly extraordinary talents. In concert with Penny, he argues that their phenomenal excellence is the foundation of their broad appeal and induces those in positions of power to strongly support their efforts and boost their organizational position and authority.

Because of my parents, …my ability to communicate tends to be better than most people's, and…that ability…, whether [it’s] orally or through the written word, has propelled my career much faster…. [For example], if I have a general manager that's not a great communicator, but he's right in what he has to say, he just does not know how to communicate it in an effective way, that's going to be a problem.
So, it's better for me to go communicate the message than it is for him, especially if I look like most of the people that I'm talking to, because I'm going to say it in a way that's going to get the point across, and be sensitive enough to not offend. Or, if it is going to offend, I'm doing it intentionally because it needs to offend.

Even when you have directors of sales out there that are African-American, those are typically gentlemen and ladies that have an amazing skill to communicate, not just a normal one or an okay one; they have the basic skill to communicate. They present themselves in a way that is above and beyond what most people do.

And, it's all relevant to here. If…director[s] of sales have an amazing ability to do that, then they put themselves in the position where people want to push them. Okay, here's the person that represents our company, great. And they articulate the vision in the company better than I can if I'm the Caucasian decision-maker. So please go ahead and do things because through you, this is the vehicle for us…to make money, which is ultimately…the bottom line of everything anyway.

Excellence is a necessary and continuous process for all good leaders, according to Danny. Rather than a set goal or a particular way of being at a specific moment in time, it is more of an ongoing journey and a lifestyle that produces long-term success.

Everybody that's fairly decent at what they do and that's constantly looking to improve, to me…you have to always pursue excellence. When you get to a certain plateau and…it's time to see how you can go to the next level, this is the kind of thing [you] have to constantly do…Excellence is not a destination, it's a new
direction….You never get there. And…folks who live really long, fulfilling lives [with] three or four careers [have] understood that.

Ronny passionately argues that “excellence has to be the focus at every level” from such obvious areas as job performance to workplace perceptions of speech and appearance. While he concedes that he has had advantages that some Blacks may not have, Ronny insists that aspirants must be willing to understand corporate expectations, adapt, and do what is contextually required to achieve success.

Fortunately…I’ve had a good educational background where speaking [proper] English was expected and demanded and was never frowned upon. So I have… few instances of some of the communication challenges that some of our other brothers and sisters do…(Some) people were brought up in areas where ax and being pacific are standard, and it’s not their fault that’s how people speak.

But in corporate America, if you ax a question in the middle of a boardroom, it will be just a stereotype. If you say be pacific when you really mean to say to be specific, people put a big label on your head as being an idiot. When you say I have five ideals when you really mean to say you have five ideas, and you can’t seem to pick up the difference between ideals and ideas, then they make the assumption that no matter what school you went to, you must not be very smart. Then they begin to infer that, ‘Hmm, maybe you got through school because of affirmative action.’

Way too many brothers and sisters…who still don’t acknowledge these things and hold on to cultural issues…say, ‘Well that’s my Black.’ Well good, [if] that’s the Black, then that’s great. How many CEOs do you see in the corporate boardroom that are Black or senior VPs that are Black with dreadlocks down to their tail end.
There is a reason they don’t do it; because it’s not the norm. Understand in corporate, the way it is today, you will not get a corner office with dreadlocks. And if it’s more important to you to wear your dreadlocks than it is to achieve in life or achieve in business, well then God bless you.

Unfortunately for us too many times that still is the case. [Blacks are] more interested in holding on to symbols that are not really related to who we are. We are as inside our head and not on our fingers or what’s tattooed on our skin or on the earrings we have. But for our people too many times that still is the standard.

…I’ve never had any issues with, ‘When in Rome do as the Romans do.’ When I was in the military arena, I put on [the appropriate attire], shaved my mustache, and took my earring off because that was the norm. And that’s how I got things done… I’ve developed a reputation of being able to adapt to the circumstances and excel. And at no time do I think I sold out… because I was able to speak intelligently or to interact with my White counterparts or… because I play golf… or because I grew up playing ice hockey[.] I was persecuted for doing that by not my White brothers but my Black brothers because I didn’t play hoop.

Nelly, too, is ardently focused on workplace excellence. Citing her success, sxe argues that in order to continually achieve and help guarantee there will always be a seat at the corporate table excellence must genuinely be a part of one’s vocational personality. Nelly doubts the time for extraordinary effort and outstanding results will ever pass because it constantly distinguishes top performers and perpetually provides one’s company with a competitive edge. And though sxe acknowledges that sxe is often overly
concerned about failure, Nelly strongly believes the pursuit of excellence in everything one does can only result in positive individual and corporate outcomes.

I grew up in a small town in [the] southwest [of a Southern state]… I went to a great college and I moved away from home, and… making my parents proud and not having to get sent home, if you will, was a big motivator. Because for my parents, education was critically important, and I just didn’t want to let them down. So… even today, and I’ve been with the company [nearly 20] years, [it] feels like… every project, every document, emails,… everything shapes how people perceive me.

Now… that’s extremely unhealthy because you can’t relax and you probably always feel like your stomach is in a knot, but it’s a reflection of who I am. If there are going to be 10 general managers, I want a buzz about me being picked for the one on your team. If there are going to be 10 people in the room, I want them to say gosh, if Nelly had a perspective, it’s really well thought out. Or if I had passed an opinion or given a recommendation that people trust I’ve always done my homework. And so… anything to prevent disappointing people is critically important to me, and that’s just the way it is. It’s in my DNA…. Not disappointing people from the sense of catering to their whim or perspective, but from I just want you to regard me as a high performer. And in that comes… safety.

After being pressed for details about this concept of safety, Nelly explains

I certainly recognize in our businesses… whether you’re private, private ownership, or a public company…, you’ve got to deliver outstanding results. So your employment, your progression, future opportunities, you’re going to need to
make money and to save money and to buy a house and then get a bigger house. All of that is hinged on delivering outstanding results...where you’ll be in a position to say, I’m better suited for opportunity A or B than another person.

So safety for me is hinged on [that idea]. I build the teams. When there’re underperformers, I’m not uncomfortable with making changes. That when it comes to sales, I have great ideas. So from that vantage point, safety comes in a company and its stakeholders understanding that if results can be delivered, I’m going to be able to do it...So when you’re building a team and creating opportunity for potential leaders..., you go to people who deliver the goods.

...Safety came in my ability to build great teams and deliver great results, have thoughtful perspective, [and be] a good solution finder. It means that I’m always going to be needed....[It is not about] they need a womyn, they need a Black womyn, they need this, that, or the other, because I don’t believe in that. I don’t think ultimately people care enough about me or us, or our circumstance to want us just because....People want folks who deliver results and it just so happens I get to be that person and be a minority and a womyn.

While acknowledging that the ability to bring diversity to a corporate environment that desperately needs it can be an advantage, a very self-assured Perry insists that excellence remains the ultimate prerequisite to success.

I happen to be very good at what I do. So the fact that I’m Black is like icing on the cake. So they can take care of two issues...have a great leader in the position and be able to [advance] diversity.
Barry is proud of the expertise he brings to his post and considers his first-rate job performance a primary factor in his relatively high pay.

I get paid pretty well. Having been in [this city] as long as I have, I think… I have probably set the bar for this position because I know my predecessor didn't get anywhere near what I get paid now, and sxe was a White womyn.

Terry also makes the point that excellent goal attainment can result in increased compensation. And although he submits that his remuneration would probably be higher if he were a White male because there would be greater “access and more opportunity to do some other things” career-wise, he discloses that he already earns more than one of his counterparts who has more company tenure.

He's like a year ahead of me, but he's almost two years ahead… in life service. However… his production numbers percentage-wise… haven't been as strong as mine, which… might be the reason why I've caught up with him salary-wise… At the end of the year when you looked at base salary plus incentives, the last two years I've been ahead of him. My production is good. I always make my budget.

Taking Barry and Terry’s argument that excellence can result in increased pay one step farther, Larry posits that superior achievement is specifically required of Black executives interested in being perceived as anything other than average or less than. He submits that Blacks must work harder and achieve more just to be considered on a par.

[It’s about] clearly having to outwork the competition to sort of stay equal and having to fight, to scrap… to get ahead. And it’s worked out well, you know, but that’s one of the issues that we have to sort of grapple with…. Assuming you have
no interest in being average or below average, assuming you want to excel,
assuming you want to be a corporate officer, yeah, that’s what you [have to] do.

Absolutely [you have to work even harder]. And…it’s not just put your nose
to the grindstone….It’s getting high visibility projects [and] it’s making sure that
your work does not go unnoticed…It’s getting along; it’s communicating and
putting people at ease. It’s taking on the tough tasks, and…if you’re going to sign
up for the tough duties, don’t screw it up. Get it right. And if you do, then you
stay well connected [and] you position yourself for other opportunities.

Like Larry, Patty emphasizes corporate racial inequality and operates under the
indoctrination that only when Blacks are indisputably better than Whites vying for the
same positions are they viable candidates for appointment. “I was taught, and I firmly
believe, that as a Black person you have to be twice as good, you have to be better,” sxe
reveals. “That's why I really went to get my CMP (certified meeting planner
designation).”

In an environment like corporate America where all managers are good, Vinny sees
excellence as a critical differentiator and admonishes Blacks to be extraordinary.

We can't be [perfect], but we can achieve excellence. It's absolutely paramount
that we strive for it…In fact, failure's not an option. If everyone's good, we've got
to be excellent…

I'll use a sports analogy….When you're in high school, you may have been
excellent. When you go to college, you find out everyone there is on the same
level….But [the] level of excellence…you had in high school is not level good in
college. What's going to differentiate you from [others] at the same position that you are competing for? It's going to be skill, discipline, [and] ability…

So…everyone's good, anyone that you are competing with for that position is good. That's how they got there. What's going to make you different is [ratcheting] your game up another level to exceed their level of good.

While Kelly agrees that African-Americans and minorities must be exceptional in order to stand out, sxe emphasizes self-confidence, modesty and the importance of knowing and effectively navigating one’s strengths and weaknesses. Regarding being actively recruited for multiple executive posts, Kelly surmises

I think…the only reason that there wasn't a question about calling me for the next assignment every time one came up is because of that….I know that I was better. I know that I was faster. I know that I was smarter….When put up against others with similar credentials, I know that I did better. And, it's not like, 'Oh, I'm great.' No, because [there’re] people who are way better than me. But, when stacked against my peers at those times, I was clear on what I had to do to make a difference. And, that's where…that whole thing about excellence makes sense. You can't just be okay, and that's across the board.

So, even in the hotel side of the business, when I got out of undergrad….Just like everyone else does, you want to do something that makes you stand out. I think we African-Americans, minorities, have to. There has to be something that is better about who you are. And one of the things I'm really good at is, I can lead people. I lead and inspire really, really well, and so the ability to move functionally laterally has been because of that.
I know where I'm good and I need to continue to get better, and I know where I'm not as good stacked up against others. But, that's also taking a good hard look and not going, ‘Oh yeah, fabulous, because my crap doesn't stink,’ not at all. That's the humility part of it. So, I'm good, but I'm not great. I know where my flaws are. I know where I get frustrated. And so, it is a part of who I am.

While Benny concedes that “Blacks have to work…very hard to accomplish anything,” his clear advice is to put forth one’s best effort since he maintains excellence is ultimately rewarded no matter who produces it.

You [have to] be good at what you do. You know, that’s plain and simple….At the end of the day…whether you’re white, red, black, or green, eventually results break through all the B.S. That can’t hold you back. So if you’re producing, you know, cream eventually rises to the top. So, it’s very important.

Though being a Black manager in a predominantly White setting can be disadvantageous, Tammy discusses the potential advantages of being in charge in a hotel and metropolitan environment where African-Americans predominate. Having spent a significant portion of her career surrounded largely by Whites, sxe notes that there are clear differences. Sxe delineates some of her achievements and implies that managers are poised for success when aesthetically and culturally there is more in common with staff.

[I’m proud] to be able to serve as a mentor to people that work for me, to be able to lead a team that is inspired because they have someone that looks like them and the role that they’re in, [and] to be able to drive the results that I’ve driven.

“Prior to me coming,” says Tammy, “we had the lowest associate engagement scores.”
Our associates were not allowed to go on [special assignment] because they were viewed as negative and having low morale. [But] now…engagement scores…have increased about 25 points….I had a 75% turnover rate when I came here. I have a 15% turnover rate now. My guest experience scores have gone up. All the team metrics that matter in our business have improved…dramatically, and I believe a lot of that has to do with the fact that they have a leader that looks like them. I mean, when I first came here they called this hotel *The Plantation*.

Betty identifies passion and self-confidence as keys to excellence and urges aspirants to choose industries and careers that truly excite them. Sxe feels that genuine enthusiasm, belief in oneself despite naysayers, and ongoing education are vital to long term success. Whether it be in the hospitality industry or [elsewhere], you…have to have a passion… [for] what you’re doing and you have to believe in yourself. Because you’re going to have people who say you can’t do it, or you’re not qualified, or this is too much. But as long as you believe you can…, as long as you have a passion…, as long as you continue to…educate yourself…through going back to school, by reading periodicals, whatever…, you can do it…But don’t get into…an industry like this that is 24/7 and want to be a general manager and have a lot of responsibility and you don’t have the passion…Because the money will come with your passion. You’ll be good at what you do, and…you’ll get rewarded.

Also emphasizing passion in the pursuit of excellence, Debby talks about the paths sxe took before finally discovering her zest for food and beverage. Although sxe had a strong educational and work background in finance and ended up employed by a “start-up telecommunications company,” Debby shares
The things I loved most [were] the social stuff, whether it was fundraising, or the Christmas party, or whatever. That's still the part of the day that lit me up as opposed to being a CFO with a financial manager.

So I decided that I needed to go back to school and figure it out, and I went…to get my masters in management, focused in hospitality. It was [there] that my finance and my hospitality love merged and I realized…there were [many others] who had similar talents and focus and interest and love for the business. Several food and beverage positions and 10 years later, Debby is fulfilling her passion as general manager for a boutique catering company.

Tommy’s comments reveal that one of the most important means to excellent performance is to understand what those in positions of power deem most critical.

What I’ve struggled with is, so you’re in a mixed audience and there are senior level people and they are predominantly…Caucasian[…]…So you want to sound smart, right? You want to sound engaged and you want to sound like you really know what’s going on with the business…So I do that, and I think quite frankly it’s been to my detriment.

…But then I watch another Black person that comes by, and…I’m looking at him like he’s a step and fetch…And it’s like, ‘Wow, they’re embraced’ and it’s like okay. And you can see the clear discomfort with me speaking what I consider to be intellectually, right?…So it’s been a challenge…throughout my career, and it’s, ‘Okay, Tommy, maybe it’s not about how smart you are and maybe it’s more about how engaged you are, right, and how comfortable people feel with you at
senior levels and what have you.’ But…I’m telling you…. it’s just plain old step and fetch let me look like a clown…And it’s so well received.

…There are times when they are clearly uncomfortable with me, and I don’t know if it’s because – and I’m not a real intimidating figure [height wise]. However, I think what’s coming out of my mouth might be. Intimidating is probably the wrong word, but it’s like, ‘No, your role is not to sound and act smart,’ right? ‘Your role is to try to be fun,’ or whatever….And people have told me, ‘Lighten up. Lighten up.’ And quite frankly it might have nothing to do with race. It might have everything to do with, ‘Tommy, people think you look too serious man.’….And I’ll take that. But the examples I see make me question sometimes, do you really want my intellectual opinion or do you just want me to kind of know my place and kind of just [bond] and so forth?

Participants identify excellence as prerequisite to workplace success for two reasons: (1) In an unfair environment, Blacks must be excellent simply to be perceived as on a par with Whites, and (2) Consistent excellence produces results, which can distinguish individuals and attract mentorship and sponsorship that ensures long term pay and managerial progression. While some cite passion and self-confidence as requisite and others emphasize awareness of top management’s priorities, all stress that excellence in every aspect of organizational life from attire to communication and job performance is critical to high achievement.

Other

A total of 308 coins were assigned to the category Other. The Other category functions as a catch-all and consists of a wide range of terms and concepts that do not fit
neatly in one of the other 29 categories. Examples include the following: disappointment, idioms, sustainability, time period, unclear, and unknown. While the idiom that Blacks have to work twice as hard and/or be twice as good as Whites appeared repeatedly and variously, for example, an amusing turn of phrase is Patty’s comment that an educational open house sxe conducted with White colleagues “went over like a turd in a punchbowl.”

With me doing open house, we got more people of color….So they saw…it was possible for somebody of color to do well….I had quite a few Asians, Hispanics, [and] Black people; the numbers went up with my classes….Now the first open house I did with two White womyn…went over like a turd in a punchbowl as far as I'm concerned, because I work alone. They're not even aware [of] what they do; and, I saw they were sabotaging me, but they were just being who they are.

**Appearance**

A total of 302 coins were assigned to the category *Appearance*. The *Appearance* category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: appearance, attire, attractiveness, hair, height, image, personal style, the look, and weight. Most closely related with the *Excellence* category, *Appearance* for many respondents revolves around conservative professional attire; neat and non-ethnic grooming—especially in avoiding braids, dreads, and facial hair; and conformity to a mainstream corporate *look*. While acknowledging the broad importance of appearance in most areas of hospitality, Penny, in response to a question about whether sxe believes her complexion has had an impact or played any role in her career success, replies,

Of course, absolutely I do. There is no doubt about it. I think being light-compleekted has definitely aided me….And whether it’s easier for them to take or
easier for them to swallow I don’t know. But I do believe…with [my company] and in general…light-complekcted managers, people, what have you have an easier time….I really do….If we charted [my career] and maybe another African-American femyle who was dark-complekcted, I don’t think that they would be where I am….It’s sad to say, but I don’t….Some might say, ‘Well, you know, looks or appearance has a lot to do with hospitality.’ …I’ll be the first…to say…that from a presentation standpoint that’s seen, whether you’re talking about the front desk position or whether you’re talking about sales and catering. There is a certain look, especially with [my company], that we go for, and there is no doubt about it. I have seen two managers, one…proportionately larger and I’ll just say a 14, 16, manager, outgoing, aggressive…really good. And I can have a manager that is a size six that is okay but…looks good, and they’ll close more contracts than that bigger manager for whatever reason. Looks is our industry.

Race

A total of 295 coins were assigned to the category Race. The Race category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: advantage-Black, advantage-race, Black firsts, color/color time, complexion, minority, race, race and gender, and race work. Danny insists that Blacks in hospitality must become more aware of the scope of racism and the tenor of the challenges faced, even relative to isms like sexism and heterosexism. He implies that such an understanding is necessary in order to successfully achieve and even turn the tide.

So, there's this thing we've got to get to man….As African-Americans, we've got to begin to understand what the obstacles are for us, how we address those
obstacles; and, I'm not walking around in rose-colored glasses at all. Trust me. Racism still exists. It exists at a higher level than people would have you believe. Race is the toughest topic to talk about. It's even tougher than talking about LGBT issues in many cases; certainly tougher than talking about gender issues. And so, it's something that we run from…because we understand the super additive nature of the experience; not of my identity, but of my experience.

Education

A total of 253 coins were assigned to the category Education. The Education category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: certification, education, historically Black college or university (HBCU), learning, lessons, and teaching. Education is commonly addressed because everyone was asked about their academic backgrounds, especially in terms of undergraduate and graduate education. Many also spoke about management, executive, and advanced training programs, as well as certifications and continuing education coursework. One of Ronny’s major points, however, focuses on education as an obviation and a way to improve career progression rates and increase the ranks of viable Black managerial aspirants.

We need to do everything we can to ensure that achieving excellence academically is prized and rewarded in our industry. We reward the kids for shooting the rock. Oh we love them, we praise them, we kiss them, and they get everything. We don’t reward them for bringing home straight A’s in science.

Education is not the most highly prized in Black communities. If you look at the Indian community, if you look at the Jewish community, at other communities, the Asian community, education is about as a high a value as you can find….We place
looks and appearance way above talking. We’re good at consuming but not good at creating. So…the emphasis needs to be put on education…and then creating and building things…

It’s okay to play sports. It’s okay be in the arts. Those are all wonderful things, but those aren’t the only things we can do. And until we have an emphasis placed at every level in schools, in community groups, in church…in communication, and math and science and all those areas, then we will lag behind in opportunity.

Now that being said…we have to call things as they are. You cannot ask for people to be promoted who are not qualified. We have to…achieve and push…for the best-qualified….And if we don’t have enough…African-American[s]…Find them at lower levels…and develop them [as] they could become leaders.

Compensation

A total of 246 coins were assigned to the category Compensation. The Compensation category includes terms and concepts which fall under the subcategories compensation and compensation-pay. Although participants were selected because they were salaried at $100,000 or more annually, some believe they are compensated on a par with the average, some feel their remuneration is sub par, and some think they are earning more than the norm. And while most feel that some socio-structural unfairness exists and they would probably be earning more if they were White males, Joeey places the bulk of the responsibility for inequity squarely on himself.

In the instances where I haven't been treated fairly…, I blame myself mainly because…it's a question of access—how much you get paid or how to negotiate how much you get paid and things of that nature. My parents were both working-
class people. So they're not going to have the knowledge of how to go and negotiate; this is how much you should get paid, this is how to go about doing it, the way they were leading into all the other things that they had experience in…

So, if I don't have a mentor or somebody teaching me, ‘Okay, this is how you negotiate. You don't stand for this, and you don't stand for that.’…, [it’s] my fault in…that I didn't have the education in those…situations to do things differently. But, it's just like anything else….I learned once, (and it’s) never going to happen again….Now, it's my responsibility to…tell [others], ‘No, that's unreasonable. Don't ask for that; that's ridiculous. This is what you need to ask for.’

Obviations

A total of 189 coins were assigned to the category Obviations. The Obviations category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: activism, advantage-adjusted perception, bulletproofing, code switching, concern, creativity, don’t dos, entrepreneurship, interdependence, obviations, open-mindedness, openness, refusal, speech, suggestions, and understanding. Obviations moves beyond recognizing potential problems or existing inequities and focuses on prevention or rectification. One example is Tammy’s discussion about the procedures her company has implemented to help ensure managers are compensated fairly and equitably. They have to report every person’s…salary and then…make sure…it’s equitable, or we get increases and don’t even know about it. So there is a process in [my company] where…yearly, they’re pulling all the salaries, the race, the gender of…all managers (and) all associates in like positions….To mitigate the risk…we
have to always be looking because if it rears its ugly head from an EEOC standpoint or any other sort of way, it’s sort of like making yourself bulletproof…

…So for my hotel I do a humyn capital review, and…compensation is a part of that review. I do mine bi-yearly. The regional team does theirs bi-yearly, and then the corporate office does the entire company yearly. So that let’s me know I’m being fairly compensated. If there are any out of guideline or equity concerns, those increases are made.

Career Progression

A total of 166 coins were assigned to the category Career Progression. The Career Progression category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: career planning, career progression, entrée, fast-tracking, future plans, management trainee program, retirement, and special program. Though many perform detailed career planning and conscientious career mapping, Harry explains that broad preparation, superior job performance, and serendipity constitute his guiding philosophy.

One of the things that has guided my career, so to speak, is…the lack of direction….I tell people I’ve been self-actualized [at] every point in my life….I have done exactly what…I thought I should be doing and what I wanted to do at that time….But I didn’t really lay out a master plan and say that I want to do this, this, this or that. And I don’t necessarily recommend that for other people….I [felt] if I prepared myself in terms of…school work, developing [my] language capability, broadening my outlook on the world, traveling internationally, reading widely, [and] developing relationships, the career specifics would take care of themselves. And that’s been pretty much the way it is.
Some people say…you only have to interview for your first job; and, if you’re doing anything worthwhile, the rest of them will come to you….That’s really the way it’s happened to me. I really haven’t gone about seeking opportunities. As a matter of fact, the only time I really did was at that 1984-85 period, all of ’84 really, and that wasn’t successful…

I still get offers. Every week somebody calls to see if I’m interested in something or the other. I always say, too, that my philosophy is that whatever position that you’re in is going to have some problems or some challenges or whatever, and the most you can hope for is having the set of problems that you want to deal with. At this point in life, I’ve decided to deal with the set represented by [my current institution]; and, the first I decide that I don’t want to deal with that set, I’ll go someplace else and have another set. But there are people who look for perfect situations in which there are no problems or challenges. I don’t think they exist.

Representation

A total of 151 coins were assigned to the category Representation. The Representation category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: advantage-under-representation, overrepresentation, representation, and under-representation. The perception that Blacks are underrepresented in the upper echelons of corporate America and overrepresented at the lowest levels is recurrent. Terry’s recollection of the number of Black managers and directors in his group reflects the reality of most respondents’ companies. Asked whether he is continually aware of his Blackness or whether it is not something he thinks about daily, Terry rejoins,
Oh, you think about it, man. When you consider we have worldwide on our global sales team upwards of 90 people and there are only five of us, yeah you feel it.

But, I got a global sales team. Let me see, there's me, Derrick, Cathy, Alice; I take that back, there's four of us. There're four of us out of about 90 worldwide, okay….There are some African-Americans in the support staff; but, as far as manager, director, VP, no, [there’re] four.

Asked why he thinks that is, Terry replies,

I'm sure that there are enough qualified individuals that happen to be African-American out there. And the reason that we don't have one in the global sales organization, I don't know….That could be a subtle incidence of some sort of discriminatory practice right there in itself.

Diversity

A total of 147 coins were assigned to the category Diversity. The Diversity category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: company superiority, difference, diversity, gay culture, globalization, identity perspective, and immigrant. Asked whether sxe believes her gender has had a significant impact, Betty responds that while sxe has faced diversity challenges in her current position, they are not particular to her company but endemic in all American business.

I don’t think…it’s just the hospitality industry that may have treated Blacks any differently….That could be said in any position in corporate America where you don’t have a lot of diversity or diversity is just coming to the forefront….People in general have a stereotype of…Blacks [and] low level Black womyn, and I think that breaking that ceiling and overcoming that and showing people that we are
just as qualified as our counterparts…may take a little while longer than a new person walking into the door. But, you know, you deal with that because you’ve dealt with it all your life.

Perspective

A total of 147 coins were assigned to the category *Perspective*. The *Perspective* category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: democracy, desegregation, difficulty, filter, frustration, misperception, optimism, perception, perspective, pessimism, philosophy, and value/value point. Several respondents talked about how their particular view of situations and circumstances that could easily be described as unfair or disadvantageous helped them to remain optimistic and positively achieve. Perry’s thoughts about the impact of race on his career, delivered after an extended pause, for instance, are a prime example. “You know, from my perspective, I do believe it’s been more of a help than it has a hindrance. I think that the positive exposure I’ve had has been more impactful [*sic*] than the negative stuff.”

Awareness

A total of 133 coins were assigned to the category *Awareness*. The *Awareness* category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: awareness, conformity, game playing/rules, knowledge, legacy, pessimism-some, powerlessness-some, reality, resignation, and unawareness. While awareness emerged as the overarching theme of this entire work, Nelly’s comments below provide a wonderful example of how a critical contextual conceptualization helps her and others more effectively navigate a predominantly White corporate hospitality setting. Specifically, sxe discusses the importance of self- and environmental awareness as it
relates to expected appearance and communication as well as truthfully mentoring and better preparing Black aspirants to successfully achieve.

I never feel confident enough or self-assured enough to say hey, people just value me for my ideas. I know that they always first see as a minority and then they see a womyn and then that sort of filters how they hear what I’m saying. So you could ask me that question a thousand different ways about a thousand different things….It just happens to be the filter that I look through everything at. I’m a minority and I’m a womyn; okay, let’s make sure that I dress appropriately when I go to these meetings. Or if I’m beginning to speak, I’m keenly aware that people are going to evaluate the words that I use, the language, how I communicate.

Now, I don’t obsess about it….But I mentor young leaders all the time. I talk about hair. I talk about clothes; because these days, people will wear anything. They think that they aren’t going to be judged on that, and then they wonder why good things don’t come their way. And I say listen, the very minute you want to go out and start your own business and build your own team and get your own stakeholders and shareholders or whatever the case may be, you can forget everything I’m saying. But if you’re in a company that’s public, whose customers evaluate leadership or associates, this is how it is….And so I tell young womyn, when I see girls show up and they’ve got those big six inch hoop earrings; I have a conversation with them. When I had associates on my team who would work in an operating department like banquets and their pants would be down around their crotch and their drawers would be hanging out the back and everything was six sizes too big, I’d say, ‘Come over here for a second; let’s talk about it. I need you
to lift your pants up. I want your belt loop in that hole. I want you to tuck your pants in, and I’m going to wait right outside the bathroom until you come back out.’ ‘Ms. Nelly!’ …I’m like, ‘Absolutely. Get your hiney in there and get it together.’ …We have to do that because the way the establishment works is it will judge you but never tell you….I think that’s part of the role that we have to play, give feedback that the establishment doesn’t.

Self-image

A total of 115 coins were assigned to the category Self-image. The Self-image category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: blessed, good/great life, personality, self-confidence, self-description, and vulnerability. Positive self-images and tremendous self-confidence are indicative of study interviewees. Lenny’s characterization of the lifestyle he enjoys as great is quite common among study participants. Despite past and present workplace challenges and stressors, it is clear that the benefits of Lenny’s executive position outweigh the disadvantages.

For me, it's just the pride factor. That's probably the most important part about…any thoughts of failure. You work so hard to get…somewhere and be able to take care of your family and be able to take care of yourself and live. I look at it as a really great life, making the money that I make, never imagined being at the level that I am. And, to know that I'm there and know that there's more, …it's…wanting to be the best and wanting to continue to grow as an individual.

Opportunity

A total of 97 coins were assigned to the category Opportunity. The Opportunity category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the
following: access, advantage, exceptions/exception to the rule, growth, and opportunity. While the concept of opportunity is addressed differently by various participants, Larry discusses it in terms of the usefulness of advanced preparation, the diversity of hospitality specialties, the criticality of seizing opportunities when and where they present themselves, and in the mindset industry must adopt to secure first-rate Black talent.

People need to think…long and hard about what they want. And if they want this corporate deal, they need to spend an awful lot of time understanding what it takes to be successful and then preparing themselves for the opportunities; because you kind of create your own opportunities. Believe me; nobody’s going to give you anything. You may luck up and get a great mentor, but that mentor is not going to be worth a red cent if you’re not going to work hard…, prepare, [and] seize the opportunities that are presented,…and build….genuine, authentic relationships. That’s what’s going to…take you from point A to point Z. And that’s where you’re going to get the [substantiation] that you’re able to produce excellent results and you’ve got some real sponsors…to give you that shot…in those rooms [behind] closed doors where all of the key decisions are made.

In terms of what needs to be done to increase upper level Black talent, Larry offers, You [have to] go and get it….There’s a stigma associated with this industry, or has been in the past, where people…will gravitate toward finance, law, [and] anything [else]. And there are significant finance opportunities in this business…legal opportunities, significant operations roles, and even significant opportunities to own [and develop] real estate assets….Again, [talent is] not going to come to you because this is not [that kind of] industry…. [Although] we need
[them], we want [them], (and) there are actually opportunities here, you actually have to go and get them and sell it….If you do that, you’ll get great talent. And if you don’t, …it’ll be a little more [difficult].

Recruitment

A total of 95 coins were assigned to the category Recruitment. The Recruitment category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: industry attractiveness, recruitment, retention, and talent. When the topic of procuring top Black talent arose, several respondents expressed that the industry has a major problem with image in that many highly capable and educated young Blacks perceive industry employment as an exercise in subservience. Kelly’s response to whether the greater onus is on aspirants to do more or for the industry to be more creative and/or thorough in its recruitment, however, is focused elsewhere.

Oh, I think there's more that the industry itself could be doing. I mean, I don't know if it is a comprehensive effort that helps companies structure this, because I think that's where a lot of people struggle. [My company] struggled for a long time because we just didn't have the inside expertise….Having gone through…multiple iterations with [my company] and heard about it in other places, where can a casino or industry organization go to get a cookie-cutter model and support for that and resources for that?

[It] would be great if there was one group to liaise with the NSMH, the [Black] MBA’s and…kind of be the facilitator of the relationship. And, again, that could be a person or a group or a board…., but something that makes it easier for businesses. Because as much as I love doing that, my focus is on generating
revenue for my property. So, when given a choice of two, guess what I always have to choose? Bread and butter; and I think that's where the problem ensues.

Drive/Ambition

A total of 94 coins were assigned to the category Drive/Ambition. The Drive/Ambition category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: aspiration, competition, drive, enjoyment, motivation, passion, pride, and uncommitted. Lenny is clearly determined and ambitious. While he is motivated to achieve his absolute best and reach ever higher levels of executive administration, he is equally committed to excellence for the sake of those who follow in his path.

Where I can help others get through whatever I've gone through, I will from a mentoring standpoint and things like that. But….I'm just not ready to settle at this point, and I don't know if I ever will. I always said, if I can do a job of this [size], I'd be okay; but, it's still not enough.

Pressed for clarification, Lenny explains that he is talking about

My drive and what I would like to accomplish. I want to…break some barriers and be able to help people. I want people to look at me as an African-American and say, he can do it, or they can do it, people can do it. I just feel like [there’re] not enough African-Americans in high-paying, high-powered—and I call it powered because you have so many people reporting to you….I have 2300 people that report to me, and I [feel] there's a trust factor from our company for them to do that….I look at that and say, ‘Okay, who can I set up and do this well so that the next Black man or Black womyn gets that opportunity also?’
I also look at it and [think] I have an important role in a sense of everybody who comes behind me. And I feel the pressure of that all the time—that I can't fail….That would prove to everybody out there that I couldn't handle it, and I just can't let that happen because I have a lot of people that have supported me over the years…saying, ‘You go; you deserve it.’ So, you feel like you're carrying some of that weight on your shoulders also. It never goes away. So, it's a lot for me; but, it's also a lot for…my people—African-Americans.

Background/Upbringing

A total of 82 coins were assigned to the category Background/Upbringing. The Background/Upbringing category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as background and upbringing. Barry describes his past experience as

Probably as traditional as it comes, with me having a hotel/restaurant degree and working in the hotel business. That's all I've done, but [I] certainly know of others who have come up through different means. It would be interesting to understand how many folks have just come from a general business background that are African-Americans and have had good success in this industry. I do think there's something to that because definitely, when I talk to people, I tend to be the exception, not the rule with a lot of my peers in terms of my background.

Gender

A total of 69 coins were assigned to the category Gender. The Gender category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as femyle and gender. After weighing issues of race and gender in the workplace, Penny submits that sxe has experienced more problems as a femyle than sxe has as a Black person.
I guess I would say, unfortunately…I feel like it’s more a femyle issue versus a race issue….In corporate America, and I know that womyn have made great strides and certainly Hillary running for President and all of that, …the reality is there is still a good old boys’ network where some men have issues dealing with womyn. And…some employees…have issues taking direction from womyn…

…I’ll give you an example. We had our general manager’s meeting [overseas] this [year]; and, my company just launched [a high-level] networking group that we’re going to do, and it’s a mentor piece. It’s also an educational awareness piece and then professional development for womyn who are coming up in [my company]. And so I’m on the council, and we had decided that because so many of us were going to be [at this general managers’] meeting that we would meet. There was an opening reception, and so we were going to have a meeting just to kind of brainstorm and come up with some ideas and also invite the other womyn in our company who were attending because there [were] about five of us that are on the founding committee. Well at the same time, there was a last minute golf tournament that was thrown together by some of the other general managers and some of the people from the corporate office. Well, at our meeting we started talking about it because none of the femyle GMs [and] none of the femyle officers in corporate were asked to participate. And we just said, ‘We think that we’ve come so far, but why is it that we weren’t even asked? Whether we would have come or not is not the issue, but you didn’t even ask us if we wanted to. You just assumed that a womyn would not want to go play golf.’
And some might look at that and say, ‘Oh, it’s not a big deal.’ [But] it is a big deal if major decisions are made on a golf course….In corporate America everyone knows that often the unspoken rules or unspoken promotions are done…so people get to learn who you are outside of work on a golf course. If you’re not even inviting the womyn to that arena, then you’ve just closed a great networking [and] socializing opportunity for us. And that was [in] 2008.

Now in a company that I think does very well with diversity and [that] was…very much 100% supportive of [our affinity group], I certainly firmly believe that our CEO…knows the importance and values in it. But it’s just those kinds of little things that still continue to happen.

Communication

A total of 65 coins were assigned to the category Communication. The Communication category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: communication, code switching, and difficulty-articulation.

Business communication is an important issue as everyone must be able to fully understand each other in order to execute the mission and effectively serve customers. Communication issues increase in complexity as organizations become more diverse. Vinny shares some of the communication challenges that he and others manage below.

[Blacks are] always minding our P's and Q's. I'm always cognizant…in general surroundings to use proper English. Now, you catch me on the weekend when I'm home, yeah, I'll [throw around an incorrect] verb here and there. I'm very relaxed. But, there's a term that I call code switching. And I don't know if you've heard of that, but [it’s] where, when I put on my Vinny corporate attire from Monday
through Friday, 9-5, I'm in...corporate mode. When I'm on my own time, I no
longer have to switch that code; so I turn it off. And, when I'm just sitting by the
pool with my boys, [I] feel secure. But, come Monday morning, we all go back to
the office; we all have professional jobs [and] don't talk about what we did over
the weekend. We are in that...corporate mode. It does happen.

Age

A total of 61 coins were assigned to the category Age. The Age category includes
terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: age,
generation/generational, and youth. While several of the respondents comment about
difficulties they face because of their relative youth, Patty shares a story about using
advanced age to her advantage.

I'm on [a particular industry board], and I'm probably on there because I'm Black, not necessarily femyle. They have these things with color, and so when [a
particular city] asked me to be on their board, I'm, like, ‘How many people of
color you got on there?’ [I] ain't going to be the only token sitting up there. ‘Fax
me a list of the 10 people so I can see [their stature] and who they are.’ The man
said, ‘Well, I don't have them by color.’ I said, ‘You're not supposed to.’ ‘I've got
five or six on there,’ [he says]. So, ‘Okay, fax me the list.’

Plus, I blame a lot of stuff on my age. I'm old. You have to forgive me. I know not what I do. I believe I [can] say anything and get away with it [or] at least
appear to anyway.
Improvement

A total of 57 coins were assigned to the category Improvement. The Improvement category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as change-improvement and improvement. Debby affirms others’ sentiment via her observation that entrepreneurship is a fairly new frontier for Blacks that represents an alternative to salaried employment and offers rich opportunities for growth, independence, and reward.

One thing that would be nice to see is more owners of…hotels and restaurants and catering businesses and the like [be] people of color. I know it's more than it used to be, but…the more we take…ownership of these things, the more we're likely to impact the industry as a whole….The industry is made of…people who didn't fit into the mainstream. The Italian and Irish people who owned and ran [one of my former companies] started working there 40 years ago because they couldn't get a job anywhere else. And they created a business that was viable and supported themselves and their own interests. So…the more we're able to do that, like the Magic Johnson’s and the Bob Johnson’s, the more we're able to expand [and] take that…to another level and expose people of color to the opportunities, the better.

Goals

A total of 48 coins were assigned to the category Goals. The Goals category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: desire, expectations, goals, and goal-setting. While some respondents make a distinction between goals and career planning, the lesson from Taffy’s corporate climb is that clear goal-setting establishes a solid foundation for professional excellence. “I think you have to have goals. That’s critical. It was critical for me. I’ve always had goals.”
People

A total of 47 coins were assigned to the category People. The People category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as famous names and people. Though several celebrities and a few African-American industry giants were referenced, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were mentioned most frequently since most interviews were conducted in the months leading up to the 2008 presidential election. Below is an example from Debby.

If you look at Hillary versus Barack, it's the same thing. Sxe would get impassioned or emotional about something, and sxe was treated in a completely different fashion than he was….It's kind of…extreme…to look at it that way, but…his swagger is more…He's got a whole lot of other issues. He can't be aggressive; he can't go on attack. I understand what it means to be the underdog and a minority and all these other things; but, at the end of the day, he's in the same room. His wife is still the support role; sxe's still looking after the kids. He's still the one. He's working seven days a week on the airplane, and his lifestyle and his family unit and experience is one that men understand.

Then you have a Sarah Palin who everyone is rallying around because sxe's got five kids and sxe's a whole other caricature….That's the role that the power structure wants womyn to identify with because that's what they feel comfortable with…There are many womyn who contribute in a completely different way, but there's a whole other list of rules.
Fairness

A total of 43 coins were assigned to the category *Fairness*. The *Fairness* category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: bulletproofing, equity, fairness, standards, and treatment-fair. As a decidedly positive concept, fairness can help people feel supported and good about themselves and their work environment. The following remarks from Barry are a good example of this.

When I first started, [my boss] was very involved in my budget and how I managed; [but], over the years it's become mine to deal with, and he lets that be known throughout the organization. So…internally…I get treated very well. I'm respectful of others, and I think being treated is about how you treat others as well. It's not just about your position.

Big Tent

A total of 41 coins were assigned to the category *Big Tent*. The *Big Tent* category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: anti-menial labor, gaming, hospitality, and possibilities. While several interviewees expressed that hospitality needs to find ways to present the full range of industry positions and careers in order to attract Blacks grads at higher rates, one of Danny’s major concerns at the outset is defining the scope of our hospitality conversation.

I was at the National Black MBA Conference… and I was talking with a potential candidate….The candidate…asked what my position was, and I told him. And he said, ‘What is that, community relations?’, which is interesting because very often that's how folks view the world. Now, I know…when we talk about the hospitality industry, there are certain categories that typically come to mind.
When I talk about hospitality, I typically think about the hotel and lodging business, and the casino gaming business….And I don't know anymore whether or not when we talk about hospitality beyond food and beverage and other kinds of things that might be attached to a full resort experience, whether we're talking about the hotel experience only or the resort experience absent casino gaming, or whether…this whole idea of gaming entertainment…supersedes the old term of hospitality or whether it's subsumed in that term.

Spirituality

A total of 38 coins were assigned to the category *Spirituality*. The *Spirituality* category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: Bible, blessed, faith, and spirituality. Though faith is not a topic that most discussed in any depth, Perry talked about the importance of spirituality in his work life.

[Spirituality]…is something that grounds you….It’s important. I think you really listen to what the Bible says and how you want to deal with people….I think that that applies to the business world….[There’re] lessons to be learned there, and I’ve been around a lot of great leaders who were definitely strong in their faith…

I lived in [a particular Southern city] for four and a half years in the Bible belt. And….we had some good conversations about religion in our employees and in our staff [and] why they reacted to certain things as they did based on their faith.

And having it as a leader is something that’s good….One thing that it does is the whole topic of stress and dealing with pressure in these roles….Ultimately they’re based on the concept that there is a power greater than you and that what you have is…something that you know is a blessing. And I think it teaches you
patience….It teaches you to accept bad things, to deal with bad things, to understand that it ain’t always you—that it’s not always your fault. That it’s not always [that you should get] the credit for it. And…those are two good lessons. Because when you know it’s not all your fault, then you don’t stress out over it; and you don’t [rejoice] over the credit and…become an egotistical maniac.

Environmental Conditions

A total of 16 coins were assigned to the category Environmental conditions. The Environmental conditions category includes terms and concepts which fall under subcategories such as the following: Black/minority willingness to say whatever, economy, and environmental conditions. Although interviews were conducted in the months leading up to the official determination that the U.S. economy was in recession, several respondents spoke about the impact of our nation’s fiscal health on their company’s operations. Joeey’s comments below were more explicit than most.

So, as we're looking to probably double in size within the next five to seven years, although the currency and the economy [have] slowed that process…., we’re very much into developing better strength right now….It's even more vital…now because traditionally, [my company] tends to…grow a lot when the economy is in a recession. There's a reason why the owners are billionaires. Because, in this type of economy, and it's really bad…., there are a lot of people out there that are holding on to their properties or holding on to their real estate. And they're looking to sell and get out of leases they can no longer maintain, and [my company] has the funds…to look at a property and see if it fits what we do and say, okay, let's put our money on the table and make that happen. So, I have a
feeling that as the economy does recover, our growth is going to happen very quickly; and…it's going to be incumbent on us to make sure that we have people in place that can do that. So, I see that as a very vital role for me right now.

Now that we have established the major and minor categories of concern for HSBHTPs in the workplace, let us consider what narrow and broad lessons the data yield in light of the preliminary literature.
CHAPTER 6

GROUNDED THEORY AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Emergent Theory

This chapter presents and explains the title theory regarding HSBHTPs that arose from interview data. As well, it discusses key study findings and conclusions in close conversation with the preliminary literature review. And while the intent of this study was to examine the phenomenon of salaried Black hospitality and tourism professionals who earn at least $100,000 annually (HSBHTPs) via semi-structured, in-depth interviews regarding who and what they believe they are and how they have achieved, the more focused question that surfaced is: What are the key success factors in six-figure Black hospitality managerial progression?

A major finding is that there is an inverse association between the quality of interpersonal workplace and social relationships and the persistence of discrimination. In short, good relationships mitigate discrimination and vice versa. Moreover, aspirants to successful six-figure Black hospitality managerial progression must:

1. recognize the pervasiveness of workplace and social discrimination and proactively avoid negative perceptions,
2. appreciate the importance of relevant and broad-based work experience and subject area expertise and focus on developing the same,
3. build and maintain authentic and quality interpersonal relationships, and
4. understand the criticality of excellence in how Blacks present themselves in predominantly White corporate America and constantly achieve distinction in various aspects of job performance.
The aforementioned statements are based on concepts that emerged from participant transcriptions as most important in achieving success. Specifically, relationships, discrimination, experience, and excellence were identified as primary concerns for six-figure BHTPs largely because these were the issues most commonly discussed. With 788, 735, 539, and 333 coding incidents, or coins, respectively, these factors surfaced as highly relevant to high-salaried Black hospitality managerial progression. Moreover, 24 out of the 26 remaining subcategories (See Table 6) were reclassified and sorted into these four main groups (See Table 7).

Ultimately, all but 441 of the original 5,337 coins were classified into the four main categories of discrimination, experience, relationships, and excellence with a total of 1832, 1040, 903, and 826 coins, correspondingly. With the final grouping, importantly, the significance of categories in terms of frequency addressed by study participants changed from relationships (788), discrimination (735), experience (539), and excellence (333) to discrimination (1832), experience (1040), relationships (903), and excellence (826). Note that 308 coins that did not neatly fit into these main groups were placed into a minor category labeled Other while a 133-coined minor category, one of the 30 established subcategories, entitled Awareness persisted because so many of its coins seemed easily to relate to, connect with, and explain the four main categories.

Active Awareness as Core Concept

As a result, active awareness conclusively arose as the single overarching concept capable of integrating and explaining the entire emergent theory. Study participants reveal that ongoing awareness and apt action is a fundamental prerequisite to long term and meaningful hospitality career progression. Respondents unanimously espouse active
awareness in discrimination, experience, relationships, and excellence terms. This led to
the conceptualization of the emergent theory as the Active Awareness of Discrimination,
Experience, Relationships, and Excellence, or AADERE (pronounced add-EAR), model
of success for six-figure Black managerial progression in the hospitality and tourism
industry. Figure 3 graphically articulates several grounded theoretical propositions:

1. Managerial success increases as active awareness of discrimination, experience,
   relationships, and excellence increase.

2. The higher the level of active awareness, the less of an issue is discrimination.

3. As active awareness increases, experience, relationships, and excellence increase.

4. For HSBHTPs, managing discrimination is the greatest success consideration
   followed by experience, relationships, and excellence in descending order.

Several data-grounded and general assumptions undergird the AADERE Model. First,
while study participants, as a group, are highly successful managers, it is possible for this
participant group to be more successful. Second, there are equal distances between low,
moderate, high, very high, extreme, and maximum levels of awareness and success.
Third, there is a perfect inverse relationship between active awareness and
discrimination. (So 1832, the existing coin level, can be used with 45 degree angles at the
X and Y axes to represent the unknown factor density range for HSBHTPs.) Fourth,
insofar as it is possible to have no work experience, no relevant relationships, and never
to operate excellently, the starting point for all three of these coins is appropriately 0.

On the graph, the $x$-axis represents AWARENESS LEVEL in Low, Moderate, High,
Very High, Extreme, and Maximum demarcations. The $y$-axis represents FACTOR LEVEL
and denotes the density of discrimination, experience, relationships, and excellence coins
Figure 3. The AADERE* Model of Progression in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry.

Note. *AADERE is an acronym for active awareness in discrimination, experience, relationships, and excellence.
in participant interview transcriptions. The data-generated factor levels (1832, 1040, 903, and 826) occur at the midpoint of the High range, dubbed High Success Threshold. Trajectories for Experience, Relationships, and Excellence begin at zero and extend through their respective points on the high success threshold (1040, 903, and 826). Since the line for discrimination theoretically intersects the x and y axes at 45 degree angles and extends through the appropriate point on the high success threshold (1832), it begins at 3,664 coins and ends at 0. Finally, managerial success is represented by the progressively shaded plot background to demonstrate that it intensifies as the level of active awareness increases.

Active awareness in terms of discrimination is emphasized nearly twice as often as in other areas and means that Blacks are obliged to recognize the pervasiveness of workplace and social discrimination and proactively avoid negative perceptions. While several respondents state that it is unhelpful to dwell on unfairness; inequality; and the reality of higher standards, disparate expectations, and unequal outcomes for Black managers; all suggest that it is foolhardy and unproductive to pretend the playing field is level. The implication is that unwarranted idealism might result in missing critical cues and forgoing obviations that could foster equal consideration and subsequent progression.

Active awareness in terms of experience signifies that Blacks must appreciate the import of relevant and broad-based work experience and subject area expertise and focus on developing the same. The message respondents repeatedly emphasize is that on-the-job experience is highly valued in hospitality. And while higher education can be important, education alone will render one disadvantaged relative to the competition. So completing a structured management trainee program or working under a strong and
supportive manager; becoming a disciplinary expert while exhibiting general competence and a willingness to apply one’s talent; taking advantage of workplace lessons, certifications, continuing education, and the like; and obtaining a solid education that renders one well able to properly speak and write are all helpful in strengthening experience and building preparedness for future advancement.

Active awareness in terms of relationships indicates that aspirants should build and maintain authentic and quality interpersonal connections. The key, according to participants, is to develop relationships that are as genuine as possible with all colleagues, but especially those in positions of power. While superior work performance is probably the best way to garner the kind of mentorship and sponsorship that can draw admiration and expedite careers, it is most commonly Whites, and even more frequently White males, who are best positioned to provide professional encouragement and promotion. And whether one is on or off the clock, quality networking and proactively putting others at ease are effective relationship tactics. As well, maintaining strong relations with family, friends, and professionals beyond the workplace and even outside one’s discipline can be critical.

Finally, active awareness in terms of excellence suggests that aspirants ought to understand the criticality of excellence in how Blacks present themselves in predominantly White corporate America and constantly achieve distinction in various aspects of job performance. Respondents’ universal conviction that Blacks must be consistently extraordinary performers, though taxing, is helpful in avoiding the appearance of mediocrity, distinguishing oneself from colleagues, and increasing the likelihood of job security and professional promotion. While job performance is the gold
standard of excellence, it is often nearly as important that aspirants shine in areas like written and oral communication, workplace attire and grooming, and education and/or certification.

Broad Points

Without exception participants are fairly comfortable in their work environments. Everyone reports that they currently are treated reasonably equitably. Since this study suggests the status of Blacks in corporate America broadly and in hospitality and tourism specifically is markedly improved from even the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, there is reason to celebrate.

On the other hand, these high-salaried Black executives universally express the need to be continually aware that they frequently are differently perceived by White counterparts, the White power structure, and White clients or guests. And most convey that, though their compensation probably falls in and around the average in their organizations, they either (a) would be earning more without the negative impacts of racialized and gender-specific (femyle or Black male) perceptions and/or (b) their White counterparts have probably negotiated at least marginally higher remuneration packages.

Another reality uncovered is that a significant number of Black hospitality executives are engaged in race work. While it is laudable that greater numbers of Blacks now hold chairperson, director, president, vice-president, and other senior titles, it may be worth examining that most interviewees are in roles focused heavily on issues like diversity. Even when job titles are identical to Whites’, as in the case of general manager, Blacks appear to be employed in predominantly minority urban centers. Thus the hospitality and tourism industry, like our nation’s residential and educational arenas, appears to be highly
segregated in terms of roles and responsibility, if not physically. Apparently, the old hotel motto that “you never put anyone up front who didn’t look like your customers” (Barry) reflects common practice. And, while it is not clear that this is bad, this is something about which the industry needs to be cognizant and think more deeply.

In the final analysis, different and unequal realities in terms of treatment and pay appear to be the norm for high-salaried Blacks in hospitality. These individuals continue to be pressured by unwritten race- and gender-specific rules to work twice as hard and make fewer mistakes just to be perceived as equal. And, although they believe their performance bar is higher, their operational environments are strained, and they are required to bring more to the table in terms of experience and skill, they receive less remuneration than their counterparts. Because of the ongoing under-representation of Blacks in corporate, they remain saddled with guinea-pig syndrome and fear reducing opportunities for others, who will likely be evaluated on the actions of predecessors rather than their own merits. Blacks still have to prove themselves at levels, points, and places where Whites are presumed competent and given the benefit of any doubt.

So while there is some cause for celebration, Blacks are not yet out of the corporate woods. There is a lingering feeling of misplacement—a fear of being regarded as outsiders, corporate immigrants striving to fit in and be regarded as full citizens of American enterprise.

The good news, however, is that

(1) There is a group of Blacks who have made it. They earn $100,000 or more annually, they are generally treated well, and their range of employment is expanding.
These individuals have been given a wealth of opportunity, guidance, and support and are well respected by the White power structure.

(2) These Black managers have developed effective strategies for achieving and maintaining success. The AADERE Model’s emphasis on being aware via recognizing discrimination, building experience, fostering relationships, and modeling excellence captures the essential elements of these leaders’ approaches and can help aspirants reach the highest rungs of the corporate ladder despite racism, sexism, stereotypes, and whatever other obstacles present themselves.

Pre-data Collection #1 Conclusions

It is important to note that because a nonprobability sample of convenience was used for this research, it is inappropriate to generalize statistical findings to the larger research population. Since this information may prove useful in generating research hypotheses for future randomized studies, however, it is appropriate to delineate them here.

In this study, men as a whole earn more than womyn since the estimated mean annual salary of the 12 male participants is higher than the estimated average pay for the eight femyle respondents. Specifically, the mean annual salary for men is $208,708 compared with $157,500 for the womyn. After controlling for cost of living, however, the mean pay for males rises to $289,642, and the femyle mean salary increases to $196,086. Notably, this correction nearly doubles the male-femyle wage gap from $51,208 to $93,556.

Conversely, the study reveals that in the $100,000 - $149,999 salary range, participating Black womyn fare much better than their male counterparts. In particular, the mean annual salary of the four femyles in this range is $141,000 versus $113,700 for the five applicable males. And though this advantage decreases by more than $11,000,
given a $174,742 mean for the womyn compared to $158,452 for the men, once the cost of living is controlled, the femyles at this pay level still decisively outpace the males.

Given estimated versus actual salaries for some in the $150,000 - $199,999 range (See Table 10), results are more tenuous; and, the picture is unclear. In terms of reported salaries, the three womyn in this group earn nearly $2,000 more than the three men, on average. When cost of living is considered, however, there is an obvious male advantage, given their $239,270 mean and an average of just $184,113 for the womyn (See Table 11). This correction translates into an additional $55,000 for each man annually.

Grounds for comparison in the $200,000 - $249,999 range were thin as there was only one femyle and one male in the group. Nevertheless, the male’s salary was about $5,000 more than the femyle’s. And the cost of living correction boosted the man’s income by more than $22,000.

At the $250,000 or more level, there were three men and no womyn in this study. Although only one of these men is technically salaried at more than $500,000 annually, the cost of living comparison rendered the group mean well in excess of this figure.

At the point where what one can obtain for her or his salary is more valuable than what he or sxe is paid, the men in this study enjoy a clear advantage over the womyn (See Tables 8 & 9). And the first pre-data collection assumption that men earn more than womyn, and Black men earn more than Black womyn is broadly supported.

The fact that it was so much more difficult to identify and secure interviews with qualified femyles in the current study suggests that the typical HSBHTP is male. Inappropriate though it may be to generalize, if this study is any indicator, the typical SBHTP male who earns $100,000 or more annually is likely to be dark-skinned, 46-47
Table 10

Participants in Descending Order by Self-Reported Salary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Complexion</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Education</th>
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</thead>
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<td>MBA</td>
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<td>South</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>MBA</td>
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Note. *Participants who had a great deal of difficulty placing themselves in either a “lighter” or “darker” group.

**While salary falls somewhere within indicated range, it is estimated at the midpoint for ranking purposes.

***While actual salary falls within the indicated range, participant’s salary is estimated for ranking purposes.
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<td>South</td>
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<td>Bachelor’s</td>
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<td>Corporate Manager</td>
<td>Some college</td>
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*Note. *Participants who had a great deal of difficulty placing themselves in either a “lighter” or “darker” group.

**While participant’s salary falls within indicated range, cost of living ranking is based on estimated salary information.

***This ranking is based on self-reported salaries or salary ranges.
years of age, hold some kind of vice president title, and earn a base of about $209,000 a year. He is 75% likely to hold at least a bachelor’s degree and 33% likely to have earned a master’s degree or higher (See Tables 8 & 9).

The typical HSBHTP femyle, on the other hand, is likely to be light-skinned, 43-44 years of age, hold the title of general manager, and earn a salary of roughly $158,000. As well, sxe is 88% likely to hold at least a bachelor’s degree and 38% likely to have earned a master’s degree or higher (See Tables 10 & 11).

The finding that HSBHTP men are typically dark-skinned while the womyn are light-skinned is interesting since respondents almost universally express that when and where majority-centered complexion bias exists, it is dark-skinned men who bear the brunt. Although most participants suggest that mainstream colorism is less of a concern for Black womyn, the literature maintains that womyn generally are more affected than men (Barnett, 2004; Hill, 2002; Thompson & Keith, 2001); and, it is notable that the highly accomplished femyles overwhelmingly describe themselves as light-skinned while the males almost all classify themselves as dark-skinned. Moreover, the top three earners, both in terms of reported salary and cost of living comparisons, are dark-skinned men.

Although no womyn in this study possess a doctorate degree as opposed to one of the men, femyle educational attainment is higher. While 25% of male participants have only some college and, therefore, no degree, 100% of the femyles hold at least an Associate’s; and, the womyn boast higher rates of bachelor’s and master’s level education. Indeed, the womyn’s attainment of a bachelor’s or higher at 88% compares favorably with U.S. Census data that more than 83% of six-figure Black femyles have accomplished the same (See Table 5). Likewise, male achievement at 75% with bachelor’s or higher degrees
exceeds the Census report of roughly 73%. Interestingly, however, the more educated womyn earn $51,000 to $94,000 less annually, depending on whether one uses reported salaries or cost of living adjustments as a basis of comparison.

Pre-data Collection #2 Conclusions

The second pre-data collection assumption was that Whites earn more than Blacks, and Blacks earn less than the average while high-salaried Whites earn more than high-salaried Blacks, and high-salaried Blacks earn less than the high-salaried average. A review of study data partially contradicts this postulation. Asked whether they believe their salaries would be more, less, or about the same if they happened to be White males, the largest group of participants—nine—expresses that they would probably receive higher pay and/or be more successful. The next biggest cluster—four—reports that they do not know whether their compensation would be greater, lesser, or unchanged by comparison. Three interviewees exhibit faith in the system and predict that their remuneration would be consistent regardless of race and/or gender. And while one respondent coolly reveals that he makes more than each of his White male counterparts, the topic went unaddressed in three cases where the question was not specifically posed.

While Danny is in the minority of respondents who believe they are not fairly salaried, the feeling that he would earn more as a White male is linked, in part, with what he terms the tradition argument. Danny suggests here that Blacks have been both drawn and pushed toward corporate staff positions in loss centers as opposed to more profit driven posts, which are considered more critical and where employees are rewarded more lucratively. And, although Kelly believes sxe is fairly compensated, sxe feels that her remuneration might be more if sxe were White and male. In addition to years of
disciplinary expertise, interestingly, Kelly cites “the whole family thing” as a mitigating pay factor since “there's a cushion for people who are moving with families.”

While sxe does not imply that sxe is grossly underpaid, Debby thinks sxe would definitely make more if sxe were a White male since sxe “probably would be a little more up front about asking for what [sxe] wanted.” In this case, gender dynamics rather than racial politics present the greater barrier. Emphasizing the ascendancy of gender, Betty reveals that there are White male equivalents in her city who earn more and a Black male colleague at a smaller and less profitable property whose salary is the same as hers. And while Betty does not believe her pay would be significantly higher, as is the case with colleagues at other companies, sxe imagines that her current compensation would be slightly more if sxe were a White male. Although Patty cannot picture being paid any more for the job sxe does at her minority-owned organization, sxe feels that her salary would probably be greater if sxe were male and worked elsewhere.

Terry bases the notion that a White male at his level would be higher paid on a relationship with a White friend with whom he lost contact and reconnected after more than a decade. The friend ended up interviewing and hiring him for a director level position. And even though Terry reckoned that their basic talents and backgrounds were similar, he believes his friend was making as much as $45,000 more.

Penny, too, suggests that sxe would be better paid if sxe were White and male. While sxe does not consider herself unfairly paid and estimates that her salary is mid-range, sxe attributes her wage to some missed opportunities. Penny explains that sxe stayed in one city a really long time without moving and that sxe should have been more direct about compensation and simply asked for more. Sxe adds, however, that sxe does not know
whether the pay sxe receives relative to her organizational contribution is more a function of gender or race as this is not a topic that is sufficiently broached in either context.

Vinny, like Danny, submits that he is not fairly compensated and cites a Black femyle colleague earning more than double his salary at another company as proof. And though he concedes the scope of her responsibilities is more complex, he thinks it “very possible that the White male may be making more doing less without the life experiences” because “there’s a double standard…when it comes to the issue of race.”

Taffy, conversely, feels that sxe is fairly paid. And though sxe expresses some reticence regarding this issue, sxe ultimately avers that White male status would render her even better compensated. “If I had to guess, probably, yeah, with my tenure and experience…I would probably be more successful.”

Three respondents disagree that things would be different if they were White males and genuinely believe they would be treated equally no matter what their ethnic or gender presentation. While Joeey offers that “there are probably certain situations where access as it relates to certain things would be different,” he views his company as far better than most and supposes a White version of himself would be treated the same, albeit for different reasons. “I think that because of the dynamic I bring to the table that I can open doors of insight,” Joeey explains. “It makes me very valuable here.” Joeey’s implication is that he currently enjoys a salary premium because of particularized skills and abilities.

Harry, too, is confident that he is fairly compensated and that his remuneration would be no different if he were White. He believes his pay “ranks right up there with…faculty members who have comparable academic and professional qualifications” and says his experience across the full range of jobs he has held is that similar qualities translate into
equivalent compensation. Harry’s assertion that he is “right on par as far as…salary and…what [his] colleagues are receiving around the world in all institutions” is bolstered because the HBCU for which he works is one of nearly a dozen schools in a state system whose “pay scales are fairly comparable across the board.”

While Benny’s initial response was that he did not know whether he would earn more if he was White, he ultimately submits that if he did earn more the difference would be slight. Benny feels that “for [his] level and position” he is fairly compensated and he would be “hard-pressed to say that [Whites would] be making more.” “I just don’t have enough data points to even make an intelligent guess, he confesses.” “[But] if…there is someone with my exact experience in this company,” Benny offers, “I would say they’re making the same.” Asked whether he thought that a White person might earn slightly less than him, Benny flatly responds, “No, I wouldn’t.”

Taking Benny’s response one step farther, four participants refuse to make a determination since they claim that they genuinely have no idea whether things would be better, worse, or the same if they were White males. Though Nelly submits that “there are certainly people far less credentialed (and) far less effective who are at senior positions, more than me,” sxe nevertheless insists, “My circumstances are unique to me.” Sxe doubts, for example, that her company would have paid for her to get her MBA if sxe were a White male because “They had them a dime a dozen. But they needed a minority womyn…, and they couldn’t get me ready for what they needed [without it].”

Although Barry does not know whether he would be making more if he were White, he is convinced that he is well paid given the local cost of living. Barry’s confidence is a
function of the conviction that he has defined the modern standard for his position and the knowledge that his White femyle predecessor earned far less.

Despite the general belief that he has been fairly paid, Perry reveals that he always felt his compensation was somewhat low. And though he does not know whether he would be earning more if he were White, Perry says he “just shut[s] up…and stop[s] worrying” since he makes considerably more than the guy who held his post previously.

Tammy’s inability to establish whether sxe would earn more if sxe was a White male is partially because “[sxe doesn’t] know what’s most important to people.” “For instance,” sxe explains, “I am not going to travel; it’s just not something I would do. I’ve been offered corporate regional VP jobs and because 60% of it would be in travel, I’ve turned them down. So it’s not fair for me to say.” Tammy says that “there were probably eight operations managers…hired with [her].” Sxe notes that “some of them are general managers now at smaller hotels, some…are executive committee members at large hotels, some…are regional folks, [and] some…are at corporate offices with specific disciplines.” “I can’t say that because they would be White males and work this hard and everything that they would be in better positions because I know some of them and they are not, and some of them are in better positions,” remarks Tammy.

Three of the study respondents—Ronny, Lenny, and Tommy—did not comment about whether they would be better compensated if they were White because the question was not directly posed. In complete contrast to the corresponding pre-data collection assumption, however, Larry discloses that he actually earns more than his White male peers. Though he concedes that he’s well paid and his salary is “probably appropriate,” he says he is never satisfied and his compensation is not where he wants it to be. While it
is difficult to conclude that Larry is not highly compensated and fairly treated, one might argue that a White male with his talent, education, and drive might be CEO of this or a similar company. And, rather than merely “mak[ing] enough money…to work close to those people who really make a lot of money,” he would be one of them.

Pre-data Collection #3 Conclusions

The third initial pre-data collection assumption was that Black employees feel the relationships with many of the White people they work with are strained or at least at lower or less desired levels than their relationships with other Blacks. That is, Blacks somehow constantly feel and know their Blackness in part because it is continually made obvious to them that their counterparts feel and know this. Strong and authentic relationships repeatedly emerged as a critical success factor for study participants.

Nelly’s comments about the ease of her progression into higher levels of responsibility provide a classic case in point.

The good news is my style and approach is very open and communicative and I have great relationships with folks. So it ended up being a very seamless transition, and my [disclosure] really was I’m not an expert at what you do; but, I am fairly expert at leadership development and talent development, and that’s the expertise that I kind of brought to the table.

Nelly indicates also that while superior preparation, performance, and promise along with exposure and timing are important to garnering support, working with good people in a forward-thinking company is fundamental. This suggests that, no matter how excellent, prepared, and propitious one is, a certain level of corporate fairness and willingness to impartially reward achievement is essential for apposite and continual progression.
I’m the first one to say I’ve had a great education, I’m a great communicator, I work incredibly hard, [and] I have solid relationship-building skills. So…at a time when our company was saying hey look, we don’t have, I was the first African-American general manager at a [specific hotel brand], managed by [my company]. I’m [in my early 30s] now, [so] that means we were a little late in the game….But…the company recognized, gee, we really need minority leaders; and, look at this young lady, sxe’s got great credentials, sxe’s hard working, [and] sxe’s got outstanding potential. So I don’t doubt that’s part of it…

One of the things that I’ve loved about [my company is] I’ve been very fortunate to work with outstanding humyn beings. Not just people who are great leaders, but people who value talent development and great leadership more so than they did other things that might be barriers for other people. So there were White men who played a very critical role in saying, ‘Hey, Nelly, I have more faith in you than you have in yourself. I know you can do this.’ So there were people who reached out to me and believed in me at a time when, quite frankly, I was [thinking,] ‘There’s no way I can go run a hotel.’

And, other people who really supported me; that was a part of it. The company’s desire to grow minority talent, I’m sure that was a part of it. The way I showed up in the role with confidence; that was a part of it. Growth as a company at the time, needing more people given how quickly we were opening hotels was a part of it….Also, I happen to work in a part of the country where people were physically closer to our headquarters, so I knew more people who were in more
senior roles than the people who were stuck working out in Kansas, right? So I
got exposure early on where other people might not have had the opportunity...

When I first got my brand job…, the SCP at the time said, ‘Hey, you and I
worked on such and such a project together.’ I didn’t even remember the man
being in the room, but ‘I liked the way you asked questions and gave feedback,
and we need somebody like that on the team.’…If I hadn’t been in the location I
was in, in the hotel that I was in, and exposed to the projects that I was..., different
things might have happened. So I think it’s a convergence of all of those things.

Though Nelly boasts robust and enduring relationships with White counterparts and
superiors, sxe explains how much easier, comfortable, an enjoyable it has been to
establish quality relationships in a managerial environment where sxe is in the majority.

It’s the intimate relationships that are nurtured more easily among peers larger in
number….Until I moved to [a major city in the south,] I really hadn’t worked with
a lot of minorities. I mean we just didn’t have any Blacks. I worked in
Philadelphia, and we didn’t have any Black folks there. I was in northern
Virginia, and we didn’t have any there. We had very few at our headquarters. So
when I moved to [a major city in the south] it was like a whole ‘nother part of our
company opened up to me—Black womyn who were directors of sales, who were
directors of humyn resources, [and] men who were GMs or who were directors of
finance….I hadn’t really been exposed to it. So what [happened is] we had little
peers, and now I have very intimate relationships. We would go to the movies
together, we would all hang out, [and] our families could get together.
And so now I’m the most senior leader. So all of these folks who were my peers, I’m now their boss; and, I have the kind of relationship with some of the minorities on my team that my White counterparts have enjoyed for literally 20 years….They’ve vacationed together with senior leaders. We just never had it with them because [we never had senior jobs]. Now I have people who have folks on their teams, when I get dressed to go out at night, I go with them. But that’s because our community, the Black community, we have relationships now… It’s a function of the interpersonal relationships that are nurtured very early on for White people, particularly White men, in how they golf [and] in how they socialize. And they carry those relationships and as they grow and develop and get access to these senior jobs, they bring their peers along…; but they’re friends. So, where minorities [are concerned], it’s not a function of being not as smart or not as effective, I think. It’s a function of the social network isn’t integrated.

But that’s the kind of stuff [Whites] have enjoyed for years. So they have a leader, but they were also peers working in a hotel 15 years ago….So when the boss is in town, they’re not nervous. They knew [him] when [he] was a snotty nosed brat, they’ve been friends for 20 years, and we just don’t have the benefit.

Nelly feels such ubiquitous and entrenched networks instantly bond and privilege Whites, and the absence of equivalent ties renders Blacks comparatively disadvantaged.

While Tommy has achieved a commendable level of status in his company as general manager for several hotels in his geographical area and has acceptable relationships with White colleagues and superiors, he, far more profoundly than Nelly, communicates that these relationships are often uneasy or less comfortable than those established with most
Blacks. Tommy suggests that gross corporate under-representation has yielded his
Blackness a distracting focal point and cause for incredulity and reticence on the part of
White colleagues and outside stakeholders. Asked whether race and the quality of
 interracial relationships has impacted his degree of career success, Tommy replies,

   When I joined the company, you literally could pick us. Let’s say at the annual
   conferences maybe there were, I don’t know, [out of] 300 assistant controllers or
directors of finance in the room, maybe there were three of us. And I can vividly
recall, you know, I don’t know how much you understand about hotel structure
and financing, but we don’t own all the hotels; we manage them. So there are
individual owners that own these hotels and they pay us to manage…for them…

   And so, obviously I sat at the table during a lot of deal discussions
and…difficult discussions around financial performance. And I can always recall
that when I came to the table it was like, ‘Whoa,’ you know….You could just feel
the hesitation. The expectation was not that a Black man would be, one, calling
the shots financially and, two, sitting at the table with people like we’re talking
about—heads of banks and in some cases CEOs of companies. And here I am,
you know, this 20-something year old Black kid, right. So, you know, it was
always a little hesitant because typically when you saw us, at least certainly when
I joined the business, we were always in housekeeping and we were always in
humyn resources. [But] you never saw us in finance and you certainly never saw
us…in the GM ranks or the sales leader ranks. So, yeah, there was always this
kind of awkward, uncomfortable [reaction]…
From an internal standpoint...when you walk into our hotels and you look at the demographics of the staff..., it’s typically people of color whether they’re Hispanic or whether they’re Asian or whether they’re African-American. And I can recall..., not so much in [my current city] because there are so many of us doing some powerful things, right? But...even to a small extent it happens in [my current city]..., anytime I walk into a room with our associates and employees, there was like, ‘Whoa, you’re the director of finance?’ Or, ‘Wow, you’re the director of operations?’ So...I still get that...from people inside the organization.

Tommy maintains that relationships are the essence of hospitality professions. He discusses the impact of attractiveness and discrimination and implies that one of the reasons Blacks are disadvantaged is not simply because appearance and first impressions count for a lot, but because race and complexion function silently as key components of the perceptual equation both inside and outside of companies.

This can be a very discriminatory business in the sense that...most of it is all relationships. A lot of it is about first impressions, and so you really need to look good, too. And when I say look, I’m talking about literally looks, you know, how attractive are you, right. And that’s not to say that everybody who is doing well in this business is attractive, but clearly there is an image, there’s a look.

I’m not trying to be vain here but somebody would probably say I’m moderately handsome, but I’m clearly Black. There are no questions around jazzy mulatto, is he light-skinned. No, no, no, there is no question, I’m a Black man, you know what I mean? And I will tell you that I can recall early in my career asking someone, ‘Wow, you know what, I really would like to go and do a Middle
East experience. I really want to work . . .,’ and someone said, ‘Forget it.’ And I
said, ‘What do you mean forget it?’ ‘Well, as a Black man you would be hated
there and you would not be well received.’ And that’s probably true . . .

…Another time I recall…vacationing in Barbados and, you know, as a young
[manager] I said, ‘Wow, I’ve heard you can save a lot of money…when you go
overseas, so I’d like to do Barbados.’ And I was told indirectly, ‘Well I’m not
sure that the islanders would respond well to you as an African-American male.
We found that they respond better to Caucasians.’…Quite frankly some of that
may be true because we trip on ourselves sometimes, you know, but it was said.

The feedback Tommy received that his race or complexion would be a liability in the
Caribbean and the Middle East is profoundly troubling since ethnic groups other than
Whites appear to be in power there. The message is that the discrimination of Blacks and
darker-skinned peoples is not simply a function of the socio-historical anatomy of
America, but is more complexly interwoven into the social fabric of the global landscape.

Because he lives in a city where property managers and leaders are frequently Black,
Tommy’s initial thought about whether colorism or complexion is an issue in this context
was that it is not. He explains, however, that he often struggles with comfortability and a
hyperawareness connected with his combined ethnicity and masculinity plus a majority
expectation of particularized behavior. Asked whether he feels the situation is different
for Black males than it is for Black femyles, Tommy retorts,

No question….[But] one of the things I try to do is not get stuck in this victim
land—‘Whoa is me. Everything is happening because of somebody else.’…So
I’m very critical of myself and what I do or not do to create success…But at the
same time I’m pretty intuitive and I have two very good friends [who are womyn], and one is now my boss. And I have said to both of them, ‘I want you to just watch what happens when we walk into this dinner [or] into this reception. Just watch the chemistry; watch the dynamic.’ Neither one of them believed me…

And so [we walk] in, and it’s amazing how they all just flock to the womyn and I’ve got to go out of my way to extend myself to everybody in the room to kind of create that network and experience and create some conversation. But with the womyn it’s like oh, no, it’s coming to them. It is clear…And so I remember saying that because they’re like, ‘Oh, no…Get out of here, you’re kidding me.’ And I said, ‘Watch. I want you to observe in the next couple of meetings, the next couple of events we go to,’ and they’re now believers. Clearly, there is a difference. And I don’t know why because again I don’t want to get into, ‘Well, you know, it’s the Black male machismo versus the Caucasian,’ you know. I don’t want to get into all those feelings because I don’t know what it is. But I do know what I feel, and I feel clearly a difference.

Tommy submits that there are a lot of negative mainstream beliefs about Black males, in particular. He contends that such views complicate his corporate life and the lives of those like him, and he explains steps he has taken to mitigate Whites’ perception.

There are definitely some paradigms out there around lazy Black men. And although it’s not said, that might play into it a little bit….I had a Caucasian boss say to me…a couple of years back when I was interviewing for another job and my results were stellar, stellar, okay? And he goes, ‘Yeah, so, okay, this is a big interview. I need you to meet with the owners and so forth.’ And he says, ‘We’re
a little worried about how you might come across.’ And I said, ‘Huh?’ And he said, ‘Well, you know, you’re kind of a laid back style.’ I’m like, and I had never heard that before, right? And to me there is nothing good about being labeled laid back….And I was like, ‘Hmm, okay let me put that in the back.’ And now is not the time to get into it with him, but I need to get underneath that later at some point, right? And so I thought, ‘Okay.’

And the way I chose to deal with it was I said, ‘Okay Tommy. Somehow you are—they’re reading something that would indicate you’re laid back.’ And to be honest with you…, remember I told you, I said in the beginning how one of my struggles has been how I’ve showed with them and it’s about being smart and being able to add value to the conversation rather than just kind of being who I am, right? But I think to some extent when I did that it kind of gave this impression of, because, you know, I’m not a wild man, I’m not going to get all crazy over something, you know, right? But somehow I gave them that impression. So I said, ‘So, what I need to do then is tweak my behavior and kind of maybe show them a little more emotion and a little more intensity or candor around how I feel about certain topics or whatever.’ And so I chose to do that.

And this laid back thing…I felt like it went away. It’s probably still there. But then I thought, ‘How much of that is really how I show up and how much…is just that there are some paradigms out there about Black men versus Black womyn?’

Asked whether he was holding back to avoid problems but found that this was causing an issue from other people’s perspective, Tommy responds,
Yep, that’s probably an accurate way of saying it. You know, here I am being PC, right? And in doing so it probably created more problems for me because I didn’t probably experience whatever subject, you know what I mean? But at the same token, what you have to know about me…is I obsess over my own self-development and I am critically critical of myself. And so this always is ongoing development.…People have told me, ‘Man, you’re too critical of yourself.’ So…I can’t rule out the fact that, ‘You know what? Tommy, why does it always [have] to be about you? There might be some other factors out there.’…

Yes, I am suggesting that my behavior could have possibly led to that perception. But at the same time I am so overly obsessive about my own self that maybe I’m creating critique of myself that’s really not even there.

Tommy’s point is that he and other corporate Black men face particularized difficulties that make their experiences markedly different not only from the norm but also from their Black femyle complements.

Pre-data Collection #4 Conclusions

In relation to the fourth pre-data collection assumption that high-salaried or upper management Blacks have more extensive educational backgrounds than their White counterparts or the average, most interviewees were asked whether they felt their level of educational attainment was greater than, less than, or roughly equal to their White counterparts. Feedback regarding this point was mixed. While Betty describes Blacks as “stronger than what we were maybe 20 years ago,” the majority of respondents view their education as above average, others consider themselves equal to their complements, and only one participant expressly describes his scholastic achievement as below average.
Nelly, Debby, and Benny are among those who deem their educational attainment superior. “Many of my counterparts do not have an MBA,” says Nelly.

My boss doesn’t have an MBA, but he’s been with the company for almost 30 years. He grew up in this part of the business where I didn’t…, and we happen to be a company that believes very much in working from the bottom… I mean the president of [my company] started as a server—like a bar back…, so our company has a culture and a history of growing… from within. Many people don’t have those kinds of educational credentials, not that they’re not educated, but we have many… who have on-the-job training and 30+ years of experience [in] hotels.

So…from a degree perspective, I’m comparable if not above many of my peers. Nelly’s point that experience can match or trump education in the hospitality industry was fairly common.

While several respondents discuss the political horse trading regarding experience and education in hospitality job promotion, Debby indicates that race and gender considerations often prevented her from capitalizing on her qualifications.

There were no womyn, no one of color, male or femyle [in upper management].
So it was very clear that those people who were promoted were White and male, sometimes even younger, many [with] less education and less experience…

I think people feel comfortable, especially in food and beverage, around people… who are most like them, especially when you're talking about a hospitality restaurant kind of experience where a lot of people are a little leery of people with an education. They're more comfortable with people who have sort of come up through the trenches kind of thing…. I think it's only natural, especially if
you have a senior management who never went to college, who never went to business school, who never was really trained in how to be managers, and they're managing a multi-million-dollar division because they've just been with the company forever and they have earned [it]. They have the tools…they have, and for better or for worse, they promote and manage the best that they know how…

The level of my education [is] the same or more than most people in my position. My executive chef, sxe has a master’s in fine art. Sxe never went to culinary school; sxe just worked through all her educational experiences in kitchens, which is rare. And I also have a salesperson on staff who is now a master’s student of theater, who has a master’s degree but is now a catering sales person….But in terms of focus on the…hospitality discipline, it's few and far between in the food and beverage world because, even with a lot of education, no one would take me seriously if I didn't have the experience.

Although he acknowledges the primacy of industry experience, Benny believes academic credential appreciation, though still not on a par with other industries, is increasingly important in hospitality. In the context of his own organization, incidentally, Benny is confident that he is ahead of the educational attainment curve.

It’s catching up, but it’s still not to the level of some of the other white collar companies, banks, and consulting firms, etc….It’s getting to the point where our company, inside the industry, is pushing intelligence. You can’t teach smart, but you can get people in who are smart and have demonstrated some level of intelligence to learn the business and come in with creative ideas. I’d say our company is probably on the forefront of that, but even still within the company,
I’d say [my educational level is] still slightly above others in similar positions…So our company does reward people with graduate degrees or advanced degrees and experience. But they also reward experience internally.

While Nelly, Debby, and Benny believe their academic achievement exceeds that of many of their White peers, Taffy and Tammy are examples of respondents who feel their scholastic attainment is comparable. Since Taffy communicates that sxe began her hotel career with an associate’s degree and earned a bachelor’s along the way, sxe was asked whether an associate’s degree was about average at that time or whether it was above or below the levels of her White counterparts. Taffy replies,

At the time, again, you’re talking a company that had less than [fifty odd thousand people and] the practice was [to] promote [from] within. We used to move around a lot because again it was the time where the company…was growing and people were moving and you didn’t have enough advantages. So…back then a lot of people didn’t have degrees because they were promoted from within….As it is now, a bachelor or AA doesn’t mean anything; it’s master’s, doctorate.

Asked whether there are almost none, just some, or a lot of hotel general managers in her company that do not have a college degree, Taffy states that there are some. Sxe believes this is most likely true among baby boomers and “the older generation. The new generation, I don’t think there would be any,” Taffy offers. Sxe confirms, however, that there are definitely general managers of major properties that do not have degrees.

Tammy echoes this sentiment. And though sxe waffles regarding the general perception of her associate degree status, sxe views her academic preparedness on
balance as equivalent to her peers since there are individuals above, below, and equal to her station with different levels of achievement.

For a general manager, it might be at the same or below. But in the hospitality industry, it could be the same, above, or below because the only job in the hotel that requires you to have a four-year degree is our finance director….It’s always [going to] give you an extra push, but the only job [for which] that’s required is the director of finance or anyone in the management and finance.

But…most general managers do have a four-year degree. So it’s either below or at parity. I can’t tell you that 100% of our general managers have a four-year degree. My previous boss who was a market vice president did not have [one].

Lenny readily grants that his educational attainment is sub-par for his organizational position but credits superior work experience for his current success. He adds, however, that times have changed as education has become more vital for corporate ascension.

I did about a year-and-a-half of community college. I did not graduate. I pretty much worked my way up through several companies...

I definitely feel [my academic achievement is] below average at this level that I'm at now, or even the last couple of jobs that I've had. Nowadays especially, it's very unusual that you continue where I'm at and even further up without a college education, and I believe it does come back to haunt you.

Despite limited formal education, Lenny believes an extraordinarily deep and broad-based hospitality background has repeatedly rendered him superior to the competition. Asked whether there are many others at his level with no four-year degree, nonetheless, Lenny remarks that it is doubtful. “I would say a few. I don't think there's very many.”
Pre-data Collection #5 Conclusions

Regarding the fifth pre-data collection assumption that *high-salaried or upper management Blacks have more extensive employment backgrounds than their White counterparts or the average*, participants were asked questions which gauged the depth of their work experience relative to similarly situated Whites. In characterizing the scope of his decades of experience, Danny reflects on how central he has been to the architecture of modern gaming entertainment. He portrays his own learning as deep and ongoing and urges aspirants to develop general knowledge and basic competence across a range of critical areas rather than narrowly pursue knowledge or futilely seek omnipresent expertise. Danny believes the best leaders are generalists and thinks broad-based learning empowers people to pose the kind of questions that drive effective business decisions.

What I saw [throughout my career progression] was a proliferation of casino gaming in middle America. In fact, I was a part of the development team as we were going from state to state to try and get [legalization], and then after[wards], to begin to position ourselves to have an appropriately positive business community….So, this whole new era of casino gaming in the United States beyond Nevada and New Jersey, I was part and parcel of [that] growth and development...And, that's a pretty exciting statement to be able to make…having been on the ground and literally…not seeing anybody like me until probably the mid- to late-'90's, when I ran into [another prominent Black individual]. But, he was the only one that I'd run into. We were both giving speeches at [a major association gathering], because everybody was still interested in trying to get gaming into these different jurisdictions…
Now, here's the other thing I would give you, and this may be helpful for you in kind of evaluating some of the things I've said. The more general you are in an organization; the more valuable you become over time….If you've got a smattering of experiences in a smattering of different departments, doing a smattering of different things, and you've been smart enough to understand…that you would not be the consummate expert in each of those areas, but you spend the time learning the questions that you needed to ask in order to get to a good business outcome….then that puts you in the position as a consummate generalist within a lot of areas….I look at having worked in development, government relations, finance, that kind of thing. I learned something different in each one of those, just like I've learned different things in what I'm doing now. So, that's made me much more general. So, I can talk to you about a number of different things.

I can talk to you about deductibles and self-insured retentions and re-insurers and all that kind of stuff, risk management perspective. I can talk to you about a number of different issues from a public policy perspective. I can talk to you about how we would manage around certain finance issues. I can talk to you about how we would ideally position our organization from a community reinvestment perspective….So now, if I were to do a resume…it would reflect some fairly concentrated experiences that may be of value either in the way of consulting with somebody or as an expert who can come and talk to a group about how they ought to think about the world if they're in organizations.

Regarding industry progression, Nelly’s experience speaks to issues like age and timing, the importance of building a reputation of excellence and nurturing business
relationships, striking the right balance between education and practice in modern corporate advancement, the logistics of parlaying expertise in one occupational area to competency in another, challenges in acquiring multi-disciplinary proficiency within a single company, and the inexorable reality of hard work.

By the time I was [in my mid-twenties], …I had three jobs under my belt….I was asked to go to [a region in a Southern state] to run another hotel that had been struggling, and I picked up and did that for awhile; and, then [my company] went through a transition where we created three sort of separate, distinct organizations. One to focus on brands, one to focus on operations out in the field, and the other to provide sort of core services, discipline-type support, HR, sales, [etc.]….Our company was a lot smaller then, but they needed GMs from the field to be a part of the brand organization to inform the strategy work they were doing.

So they said, ‘Hey, Nelly, would you come? You always seem to have an opinion. We can count on you to be sort of vocal at meetings and sessions’….I didn’t even know what it meant to do brand work at the time….But I said sure, and I got there and realized very quickly that I was at a corporate headquarters where almost everybody had an MBA. These people were incredibly bright [and] very hardworking, but they spoke a language and framed up information and business results and strategy in a way that I wasn’t accustomed to. I was a knock on doors, hit the streets, run hotels, get rooms cleaned, go on sales calls, in the trenches kind of operator…, and here I was in [a] business climate [where] I needed a new language…not only to be effective, but to compete, ultimately.
And...the company said, ‘Hey, listen, if you’re interested in getting an MBA, we’ll support you.’ ...So while I was a brand director, [they] allowed me to go to business school full-time and supported me financially in getting my degree....[I] worked on various and sundry...operating strategies, if you will. The other thing we worked on is the development of a new brand. I worked on a small team, but ended up ultimately being a brand vice president with a very small start up brand. But by this time I’d been with the company maybe six or seven years. I was very young, I had gone back to get my MBA, and I was just working my patookie off.

I did that...at headquarters maybe four or five years, give or take, and then we went through reorganization in the brand world, and I needed to think about what I was going to do next. I was feeling fairly self-conscious because I’d worked with only one company since I’d graduated, and, at that time, that was fairly strange. People were moving often, and I thought, ‘Wait a minute, I’ve been in multiple states, I’ve been in multiple brands, in multiple roles, in multiple businesses and the time has flown by. Why do I need to quit the company? It’s been good to me, I’ve worked hard, and I’ve been good to it.’

And I was offered the opportunity to...be what’s called an executive ID, which basically means they say, ‘Hey, look, we want you to go run full-service hotels, but we recognize that you haven’t grown up in a full-service environment.’ Like, I didn’t have any food and beverage background; so, I had an MBA, sales experience, brand experience, but I didn’t have any full-service operating experience. So I developed, in partnership with a couple of other people, my own executive ID for 90 days. And a couple of different regions had the opportunity to
work with me to say where do I want to go and who wants me out in the field.

And one leader in particular with whom I had worked said, ‘Hey, I really want to
get you out in my region,’ which happened to be [a major Southern city] was a
part of it, and I went through this…full-service orientation program primarily
including food and beverage where I went from hotel to hotel…learning [in each
of the] disciplines and actually doing the work….I worked a…22 or 23-hour shift
in a kitchen once because I wanted to see what [that was] like. What were the
strains? What happens when people call off? What happens when there’s no chef?
What happens when the prep folks don’t come in the morning? How do you make
200 pizzas in a night? Here I was, I’d been a brand vice president, my background
was in sales, and I literally was learning how to cook 250 pieces of salmon. So I
went through that for awhile; and, then after the executive ID, I went to be the
director of operations at one of our full-service hotels.

While Kelly acknowledges that sxe does not have the kind of experience that comes
from working one’s way through the hospitality ranks, sxe insists that sxe has paid her
dues elsewhere and is deserving of her seemingly instant executive status.

I can't say, ‘Oh, well, I started as a cook and worked my way up.’ I didn't. I
started as an exec, but I also worked my way up in other organizations first. So it's
not like I don't know what it's like, right, to your point about, did I work the hard
way? Not here, but I have, and I've also done a lot of different jobs.

Though Kelly suggests that her education and specialized training are intimately
linked with her organizational status, sxe also thinks internal and extramural business
experience should be key factors in determining executive pay.
It's not about the fact that I'm smarter, went to a great school or anything. Let's just stack up the experience outside and inside the company, and the educational background, which is what [my company] is so well known for….Let's just put it on paper and then put the two numbers together and say, this person because of this should be making this. This person because of this should be making that. At specific times, it doesn't always tie easily.

Kelly discusses the impact of limited task-specific experience and expresses irritation with constantly having to negotiate salary via a story about working for a femyle boss who fairly and equitably compensated her without the aggravation of haggling. Kelly was so appreciative of the experience-based pay rationale and the generous benefit of the doubt sxe received that sxe incorporated similar strategies into her own managerial style.

There's only one time that I didn't have to negotiate my salary, and that was when I worked for the womyn in [a Midwestern state]….Sxe said, ‘Here's what my expectation is of you; here's the role I'm putting you into. I know you don't have the experience, so I’m putting you in the midpoint of this range. And if and when you exceed these goals, this is where you'll be next year.’ And it happened exactly like sxe said. Every other time, there's a negotiation, because you know the mid, the low, the high based on company numbers. So I am roughly above median, but I'm also only a year into my current position, a year-and-a-half kind of thing. So I know that fluctuates. So, if I had been a [specific kind of VP] for the eight years, I should be on the higher end, which I don't expect to be.

I mean, it was above where I was expecting because I knew I didn't have the experience….I knew sxe…could have started me at the low end….[But] because
of the other experience that I had and the expectations of where sxe wanted me to be, sxe put me dead smack in the middle of the range which was absolutely fair. I mean, sxe even explained to me how sxe calculated it. ‘I could have done A or B. I chose to give you B, and this is where we stand, and these are the other things that I'm going to do for you because these are the concerns you have moving into this role.’ Because, I had a house in [a Southern state], and I was commuting to [a Midwestern state] for this job temporarily, and sxe wanted to make it a permanent role….And sxe said, ‘I know you're going to worry about your house and selling it and all these questions, so here's what I'm going to do for you.’ Sxe said, ‘I also don't want to pay $40,000 relo,’ right? The organization’s giving you a year to do this. I'm setting you up; I'm X, Y, Z.’ And, I've done that with other people to say, ‘Alright, here are your concerns. These are the things I'm laying out operationally to take care of your concerns such that you can do the job I need you to do.’

Debby’s stint in a specialized program at a Wall Street financial powerhouse has proven to be a tremendous asset in her succession from station to station in hospitality circles. Her experience amplifies Kelly’s point that employment outside one’s company can and should factor significantly in organizational rank and individual remuneration.

My experience at [a well known financial firm] was sort of like a Harvard degree. No matter where I go, even though that's not something that I do or even in the same realm of reality, it's always the one thing that everybody looks at as the gold star or the blue chip on my life experience. So I definitely know that I've been fast tracked because of the things that I've accomplished.
Although he holds an associate’s and bachelor’s degree in culinary and food services management, respectively, and boasts decades of business experience, Ronny admits that he lacks any formal education in his current field. He contends, however, that broad exposure and personal identity plus deep and varied hospitality practice are instrumental to the ease and credibility with which he performs his responsibilities.

I’ve been in the business for [over 30] years beginning first in restaurants and then resorts and then hotels and then back to education with [a particular university], back to restaurants and then ultimately to a food manufacturer…which is where I was when we got [my company] started. And I have been doing [this] for [more than a decade]. So I’ve had a big, broad experience, and I’ve had experiences in pretty much every restaurant segment except for cook service, even though I’ve had some of that, and fine dining, and then hotels and restaurants and then ultimately manufacturing. So I’ve got a pretty good understanding of restaurants, food services, manufacturing and distribution overall, which [qualifies me] if you bring all those constituents together around [a] concept that would help us build up business and improve the industry’s ability to attract diverse talents.

So it would be difficult if you didn’t have lodging, it would be difficult if you didn’t have food service…. it would be difficult to connect all those constituents if you didn’t actually have relevant experience, credibility with those audiences. So my experience from opening a number of restaurants from scratch, including [a specific company] which is a national chain well known, and hav[ing] worked in New York City and [in a particular area of another Northeastern state], and laying a program down in [a large amusement park]….again…qualifies me for the
industry [along with] the diversity element of my experience of being an African-American with a Hispanic last name for all [the] years of my life.

But when I began working at [a food manufacturer in the early 90’s] they had a very strong, good diversity and that translated into my involvement and [developing] the concept of promoting diversity as a business opportunity in our industry….Everything else has come from self-education, conference attending, reading, etc., etc. So…I don’t have a degree in organizational management or any special designation as a diversity expert. I just managed to pick this up on my own over the last 11 or 12 years.

Lenny, too, credits exceptionally rich and diverse industry experience for his substantial career advancement despite limited educational attainment. He believes the sheer volume of his work history combined with the scope of his responsibilities have consistently distinguished him notwithstanding inferior schooling.

Vinny also extols the benefits of acquiring relevant and wide-ranging experience. He submits, in fact, that real life experiences carry much more weight in hospitality than high levels of education alone. And since the industry generally takes a “career portfolio” perspective of potential candidates’ job preparedness, even though his incomplete educational record means he must constantly prove he belongs, he notes that he continues to be highly sought after and suggests the path he has taken has, indeed, been effective.

So, [a telecommunications company], I spent one year there, so I ended up with about five years in the Pacific Northwest. But, before that, I spent [about 20 years] with [a utility company], which is the largest [of its kind] in [a middle Atlantic state], and I had a variety of jobs. In fact, I worked in almost every
department within the company in that [roughly 20-year] span. So, I got everything from operations to finance to HR, [and] accounts receivable…

From my entire career portfolio, my education [is] probably more than others because of what I've experienced, having that full understanding of all the business units that I've actually worked with throughout my…career. If you're looking at your academic setting, it would probably be on par, if not slightly less.

And I put that qualifier out there because I've had to prove time and time again [that] I can compete with the best of them. The fact that I went to night school compared to someone who went to college right out of high school, I've already got a four-year working advantage….Now, my salary proportions for me look at my entire career portfolio and ability to deliver in the future. And, you're not talking to someone who is just flying by the seat of their pants. I can defend every assertion, and can quantifiably justify everything that I do, with the decisions that are made with any textbook that is written…

By the way, I have been courted by other hospitality and gaming companies since I've been here at [my current company]. Folks have told me to my face, you can have impeccable credentials, and I mean walk on water and your feet not get wet; without the relevant experience, more than likely you will get passed over. Is that indicative to the industry? Yes, it is.

Barry sees experience as the major determinant of hospitality compensation. And though he cautions aspirants fresh out of college not to immediately expect big bucks, he implies that high salaries can and will come once the appropriate dues are paid. Barry
suggests this is the way things should be although he also recognizes that this may be one of the reasons why it is difficult for the industry to attract Black grads.

I just have concerns about [young African-Americans] really coming in and…putting the time in, because it's an industry where you've got to earn your stripes. You're not going to get a college degree and go make $60,000 a year, which for folks like myself, that's a good thing. You have to put the experience in and have done some work in order to earn a good amount of pay….But a lot of…folks…see their counterparts [getting] computer science…and other degrees, and [coming] out of college and [making] a pretty good salary….It doesn't happen in this industry, and I think it's why we're not making the numbers that we need.

Even though Harry is the most educated participant since he possesses a doctorate in management in addition to an MBA and a bachelor’s, he is keen to delineate his substantial and extensive work background. Although he chairs a hotel and restaurant management department at a state university on the Eastern seaboard, he sees himself more as an experienced industry manager than a scholarly educator. While most, though not all, individuals in his position hold doctoral degrees, Harry is “a member of the Institute of Hospitality…which is based in London and gives [him] a certain amount of European presence” and he is active at multiple levels of several industry associations. As well, he has obtained a number of trade certifications including the food service management professional designation, qualification as a ServSafe proctor and administrator, and “the certified hotel and administrative designation, which means one must have been a general manager someplace for at least five years.” Harry also volunteers on a couple of dozen industry boards and maintains strong business ties to
remain relevant and grounded in issues most important to hospitality workers and leaders. And while he has positioned himself for paid board service, Harry is disappointed that no such opportunities have materialized despite his above average education and professional experience and the fact that African-Americans are so underrepresented.

For a very long time now…probably…25 years, I’ve been primarily involved in education. But my own philosophy is that I and the people that I try to put around me as educators are really managers who have elected to now apply their trade in the classroom. I don’t consider myself as a hardcore theoretical educator but rather a manager who [chooses] to be in the classroom and direct educational processes….I’ve remained in very close contact with industry in the sense that I attend all of the hotel association and restaurant association meetings and I’m active…locally, nationally, and internationally. So I’m very much aware of all the challenges that continue to be available to hotel and restaurant general managers.

I also do a lot of consulting. I generated a lot of it through former students of mine who now have been out as much as 30 years….In that time period, a lot got to the top of their profession and there are at least two directors of programs in the Caribbean….So that provides me with an opportunity to keep my classroom work and my industry experience seamless, so to speak…

…As I mentioned, I serve on a couple of dozen boards and they’re all voluntary. I have not been invited to serve on any paying boards in spite of my high profile within the industry and that I have been sort of lobbying gingerly for….There is one possibly that might come through, but basically that is sort of a concern. I have a feeling if I were of a different hue I probably would have been
invited to one of those. Actually, I’m surprised that this has not been an advantage, because I do see people on some of these boards that do not have the background and experience that I have particularly in our industry. So maybe I’m not playing the right political game or something.

Pre-data Collection #6 Conclusions

The sixth pre-data collection assumption was that Blacks generally (as well as those who are high-salaried or in upper management) feel they have not been treated completely equitably and fairly over the course of their employment. While most respondents report that they are dealt with equally overall, in contrast to the preceding notion, there was no shortage of recollections of unfairness or inequity. Taffy, for instance, shares at least two incidents that sxe has experienced in the last decade because of gender and race. The first involves participation in a board meeting as part of an executive team that was otherwise all White men. After disagreeing with the group on a particular subject, sxe was curtly pulled aside and told that sxe needed to be more like everybody else. Rather than an appreciation for the diversity of ideas, Taffy was stunned by the lack of respect and the overwhelming pressure to conform to an ideological status quo. The second issue is a concern about majority hotel guests who ignorantly look past her because of their inability to imagine that sxe is general manager. Taffy is obliged to deal with this reoccurring discrimination as it exasperatingly manifests.

Benny, too, comments that White guests regularly assume that Blacks hold subordinate positions relative to Whites. He complains that often when he is equally dressed and standing beside a White colleague, guests, presuming that he is inferior by title and position, commonly ignore him and direct their concerns to his juniors. And
even though offenders hastily redirect their queries once they are made aware, the
damage, evident in the ensuing embarrassment and cultural tension, is already done.

Though he is hard pressed to name specific internal examples, Benny cites copious
“subtleties and things” as problematic. And while he is able to ignore these issues
because he has become used to them, he reveals that such occurrences are frequent until
he dialogues with people who subsequently adjust their prejudicial perceptions. Although
Benny believes his relative youth may play a role, he is convinced that it is his race that
results in the “common questioning of direction [and] why [he’s] doing something the
way [he’s] doing it”—especially since Whites are not questioned in the same way.

Benny says he was forced to deal with the issue of differential and discriminatory
treatment directly in an interview opposite a senior level Hispanic manager who had
experienced workplace racism in the Deep South. Asked how he deals with bigotry on an
ongoing basis, Benny says he replied that he recognizes it, understands it, processes it,
but essentially pushes it to the side as long as it is a matter of simple ignorance. If it is a
repetitive concern that “interfere[s] with progress,” however, he candidly confronts it in a
one-to-one designed either to rise above the personal politics in pursuit of a common goal
or to encourage others to “move out of the way” and allow him to do his job.

While Penny wholly agrees that one’s gender and race can translate into different and
discriminatory treatment, sxe intimates that sexual bias is more potent than racial
discrimination. “Depending on the market that you’re in and…depending on your client
and what they’re used to and their point of reference,” sxe opines, “some have difficulty
understanding and believing that there is a womyn in charge.” Though sxe admits the
‘Oh, so you’re the general manager’ sxe gets in person is nebulous since sxe does not
know whether people are surprised because sxe is African-American or femyle, Penny is certain that sxe has received “more resistance or push(back) or not as much respect as [her] male counterparts would have or White male counterparts would have.”

While Benny refers to Whites’ “common questioning” as an ongoing problem, Penny refers to “automatic assumptions” as “the worse case scenario.” Once these assumptions are made, “you can see it in their eyes,” sxe says. “They’re making assumptions about you because you are (an) African-American womyn.” Penny shares an example about a White guest who had a complaint that happened to be about an African-American. After expressing his concern regarding the employee’s rudeness via telephone, Penny invited him to meet her. When the man met Penny, however, his immediate response was, ‘Oh, this is going to be a waste.’ And his follow up was, ‘Well sxe’s one of yours—one of your kind—so what are you possibly going to do to her?’ Penny was insulted by the man’s attitude and readiness to stereotype her as incapable of being professional enough to fairly adjudicate the matter since her modus operandi is whether someone is “black, brown…white or whatever, if they’re wrong they’re wrong.”

Penny reveals that racialized employee interactions can also be problematic. Sometimes when a Black-White issue arises, sxe notes, workers doubt that sxe will handle the matter earnestly because sxe is Black. As well, Penny has been disappointed in instances where Black employees felt they would automatically be given the benefit of the doubt because of their race.

Sometimes your employees assume if it’s a White-Black issue…because you are Black are you really going to take my complaint serious because I’m talking about another Black person and then vice versa. Sometimes Black employees will
assume that you’re going to give them a pass so to speak because we speak the same language or we are both Black….You don’t make those types of assumptions….I’m not just here because I’m an African-American femyle. I’m here because I’m good at what I do, and clearly I wouldn’t hold this position if I didn’t know how to separate personal from professional. So those are probably the ones that hurt the most—when people make assumptions.

Penny submits, also, that there are customers and others who are “just rednecks” that “look at you and say, ‘I do not want to do business with a Black person.’” And while womyn have made great strides in corporate America, Penny feels the greater concern is an enduring “good old boys’ network” that translates into a portion of employees at various levels who simply “have issues taking direction from womyn.”

Just as sxe perceives a male-femyle divide, Penny believes Blacks are treated unfairly relative to Whites. The ever-present expectation of superior effort and higher standards, invisible to Whites, exists for Blacks regardless of the direction of the insidious pressure. Penny maintains the everyday treatment sxe receives, her responses, and the outcomes assessments are not just about her.

I do feel as though I have to work harder….The option of failure is just not there. For one, I put that pressure on myself. But….I think that [Whites are] given a little bit more leniency, and I would say the same thing about men and womyn. Penny’s advice to Black aspirants, therefore, is to be aware of the double standards, be excellent at what you do, and seek out the identity-specific information required to successfully achieve in a White male-dominated environment.
You’ve got to step up your game. And it doesn’t mean that you need to work more hours; you just have to work smarter…You’ve got to know that there are different sets of rules out there, and you’ve got to get your hands on the right set.

Tommy explains that distinctive treatment that masquerades as positive can be problematic. While he says he has always been considered a bit of a fashion horse, he became troubled when some of his White colleagues’ compliments regarding his attire were so different from anything he heard them extend to anyone else.

Earlier in my career, people would see me and go, ‘Wow, look at that! Ooh, you’re sharp!’ And then one time someone said to me, ‘Hey, what’s up, slick?’ Okay, now that’s not cute. So I started to take a look within, and I said, ‘Okay, whenever they’re approaching my White counterparts I never, ever heard them say,’ ‘Wow, you’re sharp!’…But yet I hear it often, right? Okay Tommy, there is something wrong with that picture….Clearly it meant that I wasn’t wearing the right uniform. And to be honest with you…, it was nothing….because clearly if I was going to a club versus coming to work, I’d know the difference, right?…It may have been something as simple as...., ‘I’m going to wear that shirt and a striped tie.’…But it became clear…that you look different from everybody else around you, so you need to start to conform. So I toned down and now it’s kind of interesting….Colors are back….The basic premise of gray, blue and maybe some khaki during the summertime…still holds true, but there seems to be a lot more freedom and/or flexibility when it comes to the color of your shirts and…ties.

For his part, Harry is certain that he has been “treated fairly across the board.” Noting that “it would be really egregious if people of color were not treated fairly” at the HBCU
for which he works, Harry expresses not only that his workplace is virtually free of interpersonal or attitudinal cultural challenges but also that his compensation matches up to “faculty members who have comparable academic and professional qualifications.”

Joeey speculates that because he, from a mainstream perspective, is “articulate,” “clean cut,” presents himself well, and is comfortable “dealing with Caucasians or people that don’t look like [him]” his Blackness has helped his career. “[He’s] become the exception to the rule in a lot of people’s eyes…because of the access some…have to people like [him].” While such perceptions, however dubious, are beneficial, Joeey says the flip side of identity-based treatment privileges Whites while disadvantaging Blacks.

Everybody that works in any company at a certain level that is moderately highly compensated to extremely highly compensated goes through a cannon where they have to prove themselves because no one cares about what you did yesterday….So, I think as far as that goes, that's a level playing field. There's an expectation of production, as there should be.

But, I think to get to that point, there's a lot of stuff you have to go through. The communication style has to be far different. I can't go into a boardroom meeting and pound my fist on the desk to make a point. I have to be very cognizant of how I say what I say…Not that all people don't, but I think that it's easier for some people to get away with that [who] don’t look like me.

Joeey says he is “very well aware of the fact that anything [he does] is going to get magnified 40,000 times, not just because of [his] role, but also because [he is] African-American in [his] role.” Not only does Joeey believe the decisions he makes will
significantly impact how colleagues view him, but like Penny he is seriously concerned about how his actions may unfairly affect Blacks who follow him.

One of the things that I've been terrified of, and I never wanted someone to say, ‘Oh, well, you can't have this opportunity because the last time we tried this’... Now, no one's going to come out and say that, at last not in [the modern] northeast. But that's still very much out there....That person would have to, again, go four times—not even twice as hard—...to not only prove themselves but to dispel that we operate and do things the same way....When you're Caucasian, you are taken on your own merits. People do not lump you into one group....You're not monolithic..., and that's probably not the case when you're a person of color.

You become the representative for your culture.

While “common questioning” and “automatic assumptions” are key disparate treatment concerns for Benny and Penny, respectively, Tammy is most perturbed by Whites who attempt to “talk around” her to achieve their objectives when sxe is standing next to a majority colleague they presume to be her superior.

And though participants share a host of stories of objectionable interactions with the majority, Tammy indicates that Whites are not unique in their stereotypical perceptions. Sxe recounts that while managing a property in Georgia, sxe once serviced a group of almost exclusively White femyle romance novelists. Sxe and her largely Black staff ran into a problem toward the end of the group’s stay, when members of the predominantly African-American National Urban League began arriving and noticed that none of their guests were offered peaches while the treats were curiously presented to Whites.
We had a group in that write[s] all the romance novels, and…it’s like 99% womyn. So as a…way to follow the Georgia Peach, we gave each person at check-in a peach….However, my team wasn’t able to quickly change. The next two…or three days later Urban League was checking in and we still had romance writers checking in. So they were told before to give the peaches to the romance writers, the womyn. You know, we were calling them Georgia Peaches welcome to Georgia, blah, blah, blah. So because they weren’t able to realize, ‘Okay, we’ve got another group checking in make sure we give them peaches to the front desk,’ they were giving just the romance writers peaches.

Well when National Urban League checked in, they immediately said that [their] attendees were not getting peaches because this was a racist hotel, right? [So] three of their top executives came down to the office and were looking for the general manager. I came out to meet them and said, ‘Hi, I’m Tammy Hightower, General Manager.’ ‘You’re not the general manager.’…I said, ‘Absolutely I’m the general manager. My name is Tammy Hightower. Here is my business card. Come back to my office.’ When they got back [there], they were like, ‘Oh,’ looking around. I bet they were trying to see if [my company] was trying to put someone in front of them, you know, to calm them down. And I said, ‘No, sir, here are all my plaques. Here’s my business card; you can call anyone. I’m the general manager of this hotel responsible for the peach deal. I give to romance writers to say, “You’re now a Georgia Peach,” but I’d love for you all to be Georgia Peaches, too, and from now on when you check in everyone will be getting a peach. But this happened three days ago, and I’m sorry about my front
desk….Never in any way would I discriminate against my parents, my grandparents, my children, (and) my future grandchildren.’

And they understood it, but it was just like a big deal. So, I mean, sometimes that works for you, and sometimes being a Black leader and having Black customers they think, ‘Oh, look I gave them the hookup.’ So it goes all ways…What’s really important for me is that people know that there is a possibility that there are senior leaders in the hospitality industry that are of color. That there are people that really work hard to make a difference in the lives of the people that they employ, that they get to mentor, that they get (to) see them.

Sometimes when Black employees or customers feel they are being discriminated or treated unfairly, apparently, there are perfectly legitimate explanations. The onus, therefore, is on all involved parties to be on their best behavior, expect the best from others, strive always to be fair, seek a broad understanding of circumstances before leaping to conclusions, and civilly confront situations where injustice is evident.

Although sxe works for a predominantly minority organization, Patty says it is Whites outside her company with whom sxe must contract or otherwise do business that approach her inappropriately. Sxe asserts that because sxe represents a largely minority operation they immediately expect her to be unintelligent or poorly informed, though sxe frequently is many years their senior and has performed excellently for a long time. Patty refers to this racialized condescension as “masters of the universe stuff” that empowers Whites to deal with others in a less than proper manner.

Lenny’s anecdote about a malicious chef for whom he used to work provides yet another example of disparate workplace treatment. Lenny explains that his job at a
particular hotel was to close at night for the chef. If everything was not done perfectly, however, the chef would call early in the morning and demand that he return to the property to rectify a minor mistake or complete some minute task he had overlooked. Though Lenny says these incidents actually made him stronger, he did not appreciate being treated so harshly while others who made similar errors were given a pass.

Although Barry believes he is treated fairly internally, largely because of company longevity and a very supportive CEO, he is resigned to a sort of race-based testing that occasionally surfaces with White clients. Once he demonstrates the wherewithal to perform successfully, however, relational problems quickly dissipate and he is able to work without prejudice. Rather than becoming overly concerned with such provocations, Barry takes the occurrences in stride and uses them to perfect his craft.

Externally, there's still going to be the folks…that come to town and are surprised that I'm [a major VP] for the organization…That's something you just live with. I don't think it affects whether they want to work with me….Sometimes what happens is people want to test you, see how strong you really are, if you really do know what you supposedly are being paid to know, and they're fine. Someone comes along and wants to push the envelope, then it actually just makes me better at doing my job.

Though Larry remarks that he is in a good place, he feels that unequal workplace treatment manifests in such areas as undue second guessing by the establishment, assessment leniency for Whites, reduced or delayed promotion opportunities, having to work harder just to be on a par with the majority, and, even, struggling for distinction.
I think that there’ve been different points in my career where you may be second
guessed where your colleague may get a pass on the perception or the quality of
the work or questioning your competence. You know, maybe not getting a shot
when you thought you should have, clearly having to outwork the competition to
sort of stay equal, and having to fight, having to scrap to get ahead. And it’s
worked out well, but that’s one of the issues that we have to sort of grapple with.

Larry submits, moreover, that while corporate America is much more supportive and
patient with the mainstream, for Blacks mediocrity and second chances are dubious.

Betty agrees with Penny and Nelly that while race clearly affects workplace
treatment, gender may be more instrumental for Black femyle managers. Although sxe
notes that there has been positive change over time, Betty asserts that the initial treatment
of Blacks in most instances is different than and substandard to that of Whites even as the
same is true of executive womyn relative to males. Betty posits, moreover, that as the
Whites and males in charge get to know the Blacks and femyles who are ascending the
ranks, prejudicial and unjust treatment subsides and is replaced by a growing trust.

If a male walked into a meeting and…was focused, determined, (and) aggressive
in the sense that he wanted something accomplished within a reasonable amount
of time and even rolled out a timeline and held people accountable, they would
say he’s a very hands-on effective…manager—that, you know, he’s spot on and
he’s taking the lead. Now if a womyn does that…in a room with a bunch of
men…. they might not use that terminology, of saying that sxe’s aggressive….It
may be a different terminology. But I think that once people get to know you and
they understand your leadership and they understand what you’re trying to do is
no different than your counterparts then they get on board. But it probably takes
us a little bit longer for people to get on board than our counterparts…

I am now with [my company] most certainly because I feel that [it is at] the
forefront as far as diversity. Did I feel that way necessarily 20 years ago? No, I
did not. Did I necessarily feel that way maybe 15 years ago? No, I did not. But do
I feel that way today? Absolutely. However, you still have to overcome for people
who don’t know you and that sort of stereotype. But…the CEO of [my company]
knows me. He knows my past performance. He [trusts] that I know my job.
However, that’s not always the case…, and I understand that…

I can’t tell you how many people have said, ‘I’ve never worked for a femyle
boss.’ So if they never worked for a femyle boss, I realize…they’ve never worked
for a Black femyle boss….That’s okay because part of my job is to educate them
and show them that…you don’t treat me any different like I’m not going to treat
you any different. And we’re all going to work towards that same goal.

Ronny says race and fear are part of the illegitimacy some organizations attach to the
diversity-based service his company provides. In addition to questioning his personal
credentials, Ronny reveals that detractors have dubbed him “the Jesse Jackson of food
service and hospitality” and utilized other terms in an attempt to be disparaging.

It’s just…the nature of our work….I’ve been called a “shake down artist,” etc., etc.,
and some are not anxious to talk to us or they fear that somehow working with us
they’re going to get sued….And then there are always people who will question
your credentials, your qualifications [for] doing the job. Perhaps some of that is race-
based. Some of it is just there are enough people out there who are average (at) doing big jobs that there is no reason why they can’t ask that question.

While Danny indicts “subconscious preference” in Whites who reflexively act in ways that privilege the majority and disadvantage Blacks and others, he suggests that there is improvement since the industry has evolved from consciously requiring Blacks to prove their competence and worth while automatically granting credence to their mainstream equivalents. Danny advises aspirants to view the ubiquitously additional attention as advantageous. He asserts that consistently extraordinary achievement in the face of such myopic scrutiny can distinguish Blacks and progressively propel them.

Though subconscious preference and its corresponding and disparate burden of Black proof are problematic for Danny, what he finds infinitely more frustrating is the continued unwillingness or inability of some Whites to apply lessons learned or trust built in one context to another. The irrational reality for the Black executives involved, he contends, is that they must prove themselves time and again with no regard to the level of ease or difficulty of new occupational challenges.

Pre-data Collection #7 Conclusions

The seventh pre-data collection assumption was that *high-salaried or upper management Blacks feel accomplished, confident, and secure and are highly driven, though they believe racism is alive and well in the workplace*. Penny’s discussion of the challenges faced as a Black womyn in hospitality, for instance, substantiates this point via its clear suggestion that racism and sexism are very real problems that sxe refuses to let block her managerial advancement. While sxe conveys that her path has not been easy, sxe reveals that sxe was aware of the particularized difficulties from the outset but
is committed for the duration because this is what sxe wants. Though Penny is fiercely
determined and underscores the import of putting in the necessary time and making
critical sacrifices along the way, sxe counsels that getting one’s hands on the proper rules
of the game, surrounding oneself with helpful mentors and sponsors, and never letting
discrimination become an insurmountable barrier are all useful strategies for achieving
success despite nepotism, prejudice, and ruthless corporate politics.

Sometimes [people]…make assumptions about the past; and it hasn’t been easy.
There are several different sacrifices that I’ve had to make….When we talk about
what matters, do I think that sometimes I’ve had to put my career first and make
some decisions…to better my career that I don’t know that males had to make?
Absolutely, without a doubt….However, you have (to) decide is it worth it. For
me, yes, absolutely. It’s what I wanted. I knew from day one what the long haul
was going to be, and I’ve put in the time and…commitment to make that happen.

And I would say from a working standpoint or corporate America in general,
and I guess with the whole election and everything coming up…I’ve thought
more about it. It’s very, very cutthroat; and it’s not for the weak at heart—whether
it’s because you’re African-American or femyle or what have you….I think we’re
going to move into even more difficult times as the economy goes down and you
really do have to take stock of your backing and what you bring to the table
because the favoritism is definitely going to start kicking in. You know, the jobs
that are over $100,000 are not always given to the person who’s worked the
hardest. They’re given to the person who is in the right place at the right time and
quite honestly who has the connections; and I know that that day will never end.
And…whether we’re talking about femyles or people of color…, [we] have to learn how to play that game. If you don’t get your hands on the rules of that game and pay attention at the table…, in economic times like these, you will lose out…

From a work perspective, I guess I would say I never allowed it to be a problem because the way that I was raised was go after whatever you want. So it never dawned on me that I couldn’t be a GM…that I couldn’t be a senior vice president. I mean that was never an option. That wasn’t even on my radar screen. I never thought that being a femyle or an African-American would ever be limiting at all. So…I always surrounded myself with people who I knew had [been well respected] in the company and could assist me in getting where I wanted to be….I just kind of latched onto them. And I don’t want to say I forced them to teach me, but I guess in a way I did….I made sure that I was always a part of the conversation. And so when that conversation went up to corporate office where those decisions were made, they had my best interests.

Perry is proud of his considerable accomplishments, and his confidence brims in his matter-of-fact comments “I happen to be very good at what I do,” and “the fact that I’m Black is like icing on the cake.” He feels that this winning combination enables shrewd and forward-thinking companies to simultaneously place a great leader and effectively address the issue of corporate diversity.

Perhaps more eloquently and directly than any other participant, Lenny juxtaposes his track record of success with the urgent motivation to continually achieve….He is committed to attaining more and more not only for himself but for the pride of his myriad supporters and the benefit of Black aspirants who follow.
Larry implies that money is one of the factors that motivate him to constantly seek greater success. Commenting that 250 or 500 thousand is not a lot of money and that he now earns enough to be close to those who truly get paid, Larry declares that his ambition is not satiated and his total compensation is not yet at the desired level. And though he believes he is better compensated than his White counterparts, he feels that this should be the case given his additional identity-related responsibilities and a superior skill set.

I’m doing well, all things being equal [but] I think that there’s potential to do more. And…I’ve never just been sort of satisfied with where I am. I mean, clearly, there’ve been some…good bonus years, good stock years and the like, but it’s…certainly not where we want it.

As one of the oldest respondents, Harry possesses decades of business experience and cites his attainment of several *firsts* as evidence of exceptionality. Harry is confident in his commercial expertise, distinguishes himself from Blacks hired early on as mere tokens, and is driven by trailblazing and creating opportunity for others.

I was probably the first person hired by [a major U.S. bank], the first person of color they actually expected to do something [and add value]. They hired some other Black guys before me, but kind of they were, you might say, pretty faces, athletes they hired to give some marketing availability. In terms of someone...expected to move through the management training ranks and become an executive down the line, I was probably the first to have that distinction…

So the military, I don’t know if I mentioned…I’ve been kind of pioneering stuff all along the way, from being the first Black graduate of [a specific school]
and I probably have 20 firsts right now. I sit on a couple of dozen advisory boards…, and, in most cases, I’m the only…(and) the first (Black) person there.

For Tammy, excellence is quantifiable via astonishing improvement in the metrics her parent company uses to gauge individual property performance. Sxe links their remarkable turnaround in part with her unique ability as an African-American to inspire extraordinary performance in a predominantly Black staff.

While racism is not part of the daily work equation for Patty since sxe is employed at a predominantly minority organization, her comfortable environment as well as ample pay function as key drivers of job satisfaction. Regarding remuneration, Patty says, “To me [my salary is] a lot. Like I said, I may be naïve, but when I look at the surveys and stuff, I think I’m okay.” Patty is very confident in her vocational proficiency and the worth her company places in her professional contribution. Sxe remarks, “I'm talented. I earn my money. I just think that they can get somebody to do what I do for a lot less. But…it's longevity, and they value what I do.”

Though Nelly, too, is a confident leader who is sure of her managerial prowess, it took her a while to reach that point. In fact, several advisors and supporters along the way helped convince her that sxe had the capacity to effectively lead in challenging new contexts. So while sxe now sees herself as a manager who delivers excellent results and just happens to be minority and femyle, this self-assurance developed over time.

Early on in my career a couple of [mentors and sponsors] had more faith in me than I had in myself, in part because of this sort of palpable…fear of not wanting to put myself in a role that I thought I wasn’t going to be great at and just not even recognizing my own capability….Really the thing that they did was say ‘Hey, you
can do what you don’t even think you can do,’ in part because…they had perspective on peers who were men or who were White womyn or whatever…

So competitively speaking they had a lens on me that I didn’t have on myself. They could see how I handled projects or how I worked through issues better or worse than other people…. [So] from that standpoint I was a safe bet for them and I didn’t know [it] because I didn’t have a point of reference. Now as I’ve progressed in my career and the more senior…I’ve gotten, it is crystal clear to me.

Kelly flatly admits that sxe is motivated, in part, by fear. Her aversion to mediocrity and zest for excellence are strongly tied to feelings about herself, her culture, and future Black managers whose experiences may be shaped by the parameters of her achievement. Kelly’s resoluteness is the result of an honest assessment of her strengths and limitations and a record of exemplary and productive leadership.

Oh my goodness, [failure] is a deep-rooted fear that I have. Absolutely; it drives me to be better, to stay later, (and) to do more….I think it's a personal thing as well. I think it's very West Indian…so that's a whole part of it. But, it is also the fact that I can't just be good, I need to be the best I can. I can't just be okay, I need to be stellar….Mediocre for me is, ‘Well, sxe's alright.’ And if sxe's the only one, does that mean that the whole group, right?...I’d much rather it be, ‘Sxe's successful’ so other people can be successful.

Findings in Terms of the Preliminary Literature Review

Even though most of the respondents have defied the odds and achieved extraordinary levels of power and authority and although the overall compensation message is that they might earn slightly more if they were White males, most feel they are comparably
compensated. So, while charges of gender and racial disparity raised by Johnson (2004), Marable (2004) and Smolkin (2004) are supported, there is wide agreement that the magnitude of enduring inequity for HSBHTP’s has significantly diminished. Harris and Boddy’s (2004) unconscious discrimination theory about male managerial privilege and its consequent femyle bias is relevant directly, and by extension in racial terms. As well, the application of Smolkin’s (2004) notion of gendered pay and Goldin’s (2002) pollution discrimination theory, considering its devaluation of jobs with significant influxes of womyn and vice versa, are apposite given the observed wage gap and the preponderance of femyle participants who are general managers.

The apparent attenuation of race and gender inequity may support Lundberg and Startz’s (1983) assertion that taste discrimination theory is untenable in competitive markets. These researchers’ statistical discrimination theory, conversely, is complicated, for example, by Danny’s submission that different and unequal treatment often irrationally continues despite recurring evidence of minority business acumen.

Given the overall finding that the men in this study earn more than the womyn, the widely conceded point that femyles on average earn less than their male complements (Barnes, 2000; Benjamin, 1991; Cherry & Rodgers, 2000; Collins, 1997; Conrad, Whitehead, Mason, & Stewart, 2005; Craver, 2004; Dyson, 1996; Gates, 2004; hooks, 2000; Livers & Caver, 2003; “National Committee on Pay,” 2004; Rothenberg, 2004; Thurgood Marshall, 2006; Toutkoushian & Conley, 2005; Wilson, 1987; Yancy, 2001) is supported notwithstanding a femyle advantage in the $100,000 - $149,999 salary range.

Although an expansive stream of research concludes that Whites earn more than Blacks (for example, Barnes, 2000; Benjamin, 1991; Cherry & Rodgers, 2000; Collins,
1997; Conrad, et al, 2005; Cose, 1993; Dyson, 2004; Dyson, 2006; Gates, 2004; Hare, 2002; Isaac & See, 2001; Livers & Caver, 2003; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Pierre, 1998; Rothenberg, 2004; Teele, 2002, Thurgood Marshall, 2006; West, 1999; and Wilson, 1987), the parameters of the present study, most notably the absence of hard data regarding the salaries of White hospitality and tourism professionals who earn at least $100,000 annually, do not allow for an adequate examination of this issue. And while interviewees were asked whether they believe their salaries are higher, lower, or equal to White peers, no consensus emerges. Though the largest group of respondents speculates that its pay would be at least a little higher, several feel they would be on a par regardless of race and gender, and one comments that he already makes more than his counterparts.

Whether it is because of Benjamin’s (1991) notion of an everpresent inferiority despite high status and objective success, workplace-specific cordiality and bidirectional segregation after-hours, or increased comfortability among Blacks, participants agree that their racial difference is unfavorably noted. Indeed, interviewees commonly echo the wariness of the consistently negative and stereotypical perception that Cobbs and Turnock (2003) discuss. They amplify these researchers’ concern with the tiring second job of managing Whites’ uneasiness and the cultural tension due to limited interracial interaction though most are reluctant to endorse the contention that Blacks are largely uncomfortable in these corporate contexts. In fact, several respondents tout their ability to comfortably engage Whites as key to their success. And quite like Don Brown, a participant in the Cobbs and Turnock investigation, leaders in the current inquiry rely largely on habitual vocational excellence and relationship building to abate gratuitous concerns of un-readiness and incompetence.
Several respondents effectively raise Livers and Cavers’ (2003) point that Blacks are regularly reminded via jokes, supposedly innocuous comments, job assignments, and workplace relations that they are unhelpfully different. And while the miasma, or low-lying cloud of misperception and misrepresentation these investigators identify, continually manifests in corporate environs though its density has waned, it still causes relational difficulty among peers. As Livers and Cavers indicate, it also regularly results in Blacks having to expend twice the effort of Whites just to maintain their status. Part of the good news, however, is that without exception each of the interviewees has close relationships with White superiors in their current organizations. This, surely, is one of the reasons they have achieved the level of status that they have. Indeed, there is general consensus among participants that ascension to the upper ranks of majority organizations is virtually impossible without establishing and nurturing such connections.

Despite the quality of these relationships, however, some of the participants express the kind of corporate loneliness and isolation referenced by Isaac and See (2001) and convey that they still remain outside the innermost sanctum of the power structure and/or are not truly a part of the club. Kelly poignantly notes “in more places than not, I am always the only African-American and oftentimes was the only femyle,” “[for a] four year period I did not have a significant femyle mentorship presence at all on an operations level,” and “it's funny, when we look at the charts and you present diversity numbers, I can always point out where I am.” What is more, sxe contends

There's…a different level of scrutiny that (results from) just being the only one…or being a group of not as many as the majority, whatever the majority is.

So [here] we're specifically speaking about African-American executives. And
then, unfortunately sometimes, I'm also the youngest one….Sometimes it works
for me; many times it works against me. And so I think that, in and of itself, could
give pause in a conversation or…in a discussion. So, the question about whether
Kelly is talented, whether Kelly is capable, I think that's the first question.

Regarding workplace disconnectedness and extramural lonesomeness, Perry reveals
that his White colleagues seem to have a different relationship with each other than they
have with him. Especially from a social perspective, the fact that he does not enjoy
quintessential business activities like golf and hunting keep him outside the loop.

I do the sports thing, so if they want to sit and talk sports, we can do that. But
sitting in meetings, it's not an issue. Although what's funny is when we start
talking about…marketing to customers and conversations about entertainment and
music, without a doubt I have a different perspective on it than a lot of people in
the office because I listen to all kinds of music; whereas, I think for a lot of folks
it's rock. And the whole hip-hop and urban music, they don’t get it.

Pierre’s (1998) statement that Blacks are underrepresented in top jobs and move
through the managerial ranks much more slowly than Whites irrespective of education,
qualifications, and performance remains true. Lenny, for example, asserts that he has had
to work longer than his White colleagues to achieve the same goals.

So in that sense I believe that that's a big difference or a big change from where
the playing field is even….You have to be twice as good as the next guy to prove
that you deserve where you are or where you've been. And, I believe you really
fight and scuff for everything you have.
Interestingly, Benny’s argument that race and complexion become an issue when cultural elements like accessories, hairstyles, and make-up exert more influence on how Blacks are perceived, while in line with Pierre’s (1998) claim that race-related factors rather than business credentials negatively impact managers’ trajectories, is more far-reaching since it is dangerously, though not insidiously, tantamount to a more conservative, McWhorterish (McWhorter 2000, 2005), and Sowellian (Sowell, 1981, 1984, 1999, 2000, 2005) theory of disparity that perversely faults Blacks. While respondents agree that a conservative wardrobe is both appropriate and expected, interviewees like Danny espouse the usefulness of some allowance for personal and cultural style. Just as he characterizes his own suits as anti-“plain Jane” and consciously “does little things to make [his outfits] not be cookie cutter,” Danny argues that it is both important and inclusive for organizations to let personnel be themselves “within the context of the rules.” Indeed, companies must reevaluate written and unwritten dress codes to insure that they are being as multi-culturally appropriate and inclusive as possible while complying with universal business ethics and not offending coworkers and patrons or unduly disrupting work.

Since cross-racial attitudes, structural barriers, and other race-related factors significantly influence minority career advancement, respondents insist that establishing authentic relationships while performing excellently is the best way to change perceptions and surmount impediments. Key findings appear to support the conservative theory of discrimination (McWhorter, 2000 & 2005; Sowell, 1981, 1984, 1999, 2000, & 2005; Whitehead, 2005) by urging Black aspirants to obtain relevant and broad-based work experience and consistently perform at superior levels. The greater message,
however, is that while the blight of racial prejudice and disparity is debilitating to Blacks it is most effectively overcome by a keen recognition of the problem and a vigilant, valiant, and responsive commitment to acquiring experience, building and maintaining mitigating relationships with White colleagues and superiors, and continually pursuing excellence in all aspects of corporate responsibility.

A strict humyn capital approach to success is clearly unsupported as the only doctoral degree holder ranks more than halfway down the descending list of cost of living adjusted salaries (See Table 11) though he is the eldest and possesses the most experience, having been employed with several businesses in various capacities. Of the four persons in the top salary quintile, moreover, one possesses an MBA, two hold bachelor’s degrees, one has some college but no degree, the mean age is 47.5, and all are male. In the bottom quintile, conversely, one femyle holds an MBA, two femyles possess bachelor’s degrees, and the lone male has some college but no degree while the mean age is 45.

Regardless of educational attainment, however, respondents generally view their salaries as comparable with their White peers. Concerning the issue of representation, though, Whitehead (2005) claims that corporate leaders find it statistically safer to hire Whites since the cost of identifying well qualified Blacks is often unreasonably high. This type of prejudice or stereotyping commonly occurs, Whitehead notes, when employers consider applicants’ qualifications in relation to the perceived characteristics of an entire racial group as opposed to an individual’s actual credentials.

Lenny and Betty’s stories about being stymied by White superiors and Danny’s *tradition* argument about stereotypical and staff-centric progression speak to Pierre’s (1998) finding that minorities are regularly directed toward paths that fail to equip them
with the background and expertise customary for executive ascension, all while Whites are oppositely advised, supported, and more rapidly and relevantly promoted.

Although the parameters of this study preclude focused quantification and while most participants feel existing salary and opportunity disparities, though favorable to Whites, are far less severe than ever, there is wide agreement that “White men, college-graduates and otherwise, have the greatest returns to experience of all groups, resulting in higher combined returns…relative to any other group” (Jacob & Levin, 2000). Indeed, contemporary stories from Betty, Harry, Lenny, Ronny and others recapitulate Cose’s (1993) claim that success for top Blacks is not only more challenging but typically delayed and more modest than for comparably credentialed Whites.

Pierre’s (1998) study of high-ranking Black execs suggests that they are impaired by nonstandard socioeconomic and cultural milieus as well as pervasive prejudice. While previously documented outrage and deep dissatisfaction re drastically unfair treatment is absent among the highly accomplished and proud professionals in this study, a collective awareness of racialized inequity in opportunity and advancement, compensation, and internal and external interaction, however diminished, remains. Whether it is the common questioning of Benny, automatic assumptions about Penny, or impertinent efforts to talk around Tammy, the irksome sentiment is clear and consistent across respondents. And unlike the immediately affirming ability notions of White male managers, in particular, participants’ feedback largely squares with Cobbs and Turnock’s (2003) assessment that Black leaders often are considered inept until proven competent.

The need to expend at least twice the effort of Whites and continually prove oneself to colleagues and superiors reported by Livers and Cavers (2003) is still common. While
this view is variously articulated by different respondents, Ronny, Tammy, and Vinny specifically communicate the need for Blacks to work “twice as hard” while Danny, Harry, Lenny, Patty, Ronny, and Tammy cite the utility of being “twice as good.”

Livers and Cavers (2003) term the curious burden for underrepresented Blacks to consistently achieve excellence for the good of those that follow racial obligation, several participants veritably brand it a fear, and I refer to it as guinea pig syndrome. And since most interviewees feel that White peers link their job accomplishment with that of other Blacks, just as Livers and Cavers’ respondents believe their perceived shortcomings negatively affect their successors’ opportunities, this labeling is apposite.

Though Livers and Cavers (2003) assert that “mentors are generally inclined to assist [those] who look like themselves and with whom they can readily connect,” current participants universally express gratitude for the overwhelmingly White male mentors and sponsors who have trumpeted their work and shepherded their progression. The clear message is that while high-level advancement in majority firms may not be impossible without significant White support it is exceedingly difficult and, perhaps, even more rare.

There is evidence that uncovering corporate America’s dirty little doings, as Isaac and See (2001) put it, is hazardous to one’s career. So while Black managers often recognize racial problems, they may be more inclined to employ such obviations as disregard, excellence, and segregation as opposed to direct confrontation. And even as open as respondents are to discussing the identify-specific challenges they face, there is an occasional tinge of caution that Harry, Ronny, and Patty—the three who work for predominantly minority companies—do not exhibit. On the one hand, Patty boldly claims “[sxe] can say anything and get away with it” even if sxe “blame[s] a lot of stuff on [her]
“age” and Ronny lightheartedly stokes, “I’m not holding you liable… Ask any question you want.” On the other hand, some respondents occasionally utilize phrases like “…if this is as confidential as you say it is, I’ve got nothing to worry about,” “Being that this conversation is confidential…,” and “You’ve got to promise me now, you can’t…”

As opposed to individuals in Cose’s (1993) inquiry who express in myriad ways, “I have done everything I was supposed to do… Why in God’s name won’t they accept me as a full human being?… Why am I still not allowed to aspire to the same things every White person in America takes as a birthright?” (p. 1), contemporary participants truly believe that more opportunities than ever exist for talented Blacks. And even if their paths continue to be more challenging than their White peers’, at least the journey is less treacherous than at any time prior and there is a real shot at attaining heights and entering doors that were formerly inaccessible. Indeed, these leaders largely feel that their exemplary records, genuine cross-cultural relationships, educational attainment, and ongoing excellence are recognized by the chief powerbrokers and their efforts will continue to be rewarded at higher organizational levels.

While interviewees grandly endorse Dickens and Dickens’ (1991) view that top Black managers know their under-representation draws all eyes to them, their central goal is to understand how to successfully navigate the system rather than establish whether things are fair. They reason essentially that dwelling on the negative is wasted energy that is better directed at fully engaging one’s environment and maximizing the positives.

Important questions regarding participants include whether they are overwhelmingly represented in high-level staff posts outside core business areas, as was the case in Thomas and Gabarro’s (1999) investigation, whether the real problem is that such jobs
traditionally do not lead to CEO and other senior operations, whether Black aspirants are routinely misguided and ill-advised, whether hospitality and business as a whole should rethink appropriate pathways to executive leadership, or some combination of these.

Just as in Benjamin’s (1991) examination of the Black elite, there is no doubt that this study’s respondents remain Black in a prejudiced social system despite organizational status, achievement, and perks. And though Blacks still experience identity-based difficulty and face internal and external obstacles, in accordance with Isaac and See’s (2001) research, the chilly corporate climate of decades past has warmed significantly and created more comfortable conditions today. Finally, while racism remains the major restraining force on professional development and advancement, as Cose (1993) uncovers, the resilient Blacks in this study are more optimistic than ever that all levels of organizational leadership are attainable despite the persistence of prejudicial subtleties.

Now that the grounded AADERE model of success has been explicated and analyzed via the preliminary literature, let us turn our attention to the implications of the post-data literature.
CHAPTER 7
POST-DATA LITERATURE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter examines the AADERE model of success and key study findings and conclusions in dialogue with the post-data literature. The emergent concepts of colorism, mentorship and sponsorship, and victimization, in particular, are pondered in view of participants’ shared experiences. Finally, research limitations are addressed and grounded theoretical propositions are delineated along with a host of other potential research paths and ideas.

Victimization vs. Victimology/Victimhood

Victimology is a concept discussed by Orlando Patterson (1997) and John H. McWhorter (2000, 2003, & 2005). Patterson interrogates victimhood and “the bizarre cult of the victim” (1997, p. 6) while McWhorter builds on these notions via a critique of the Cult of Victimology. In Losing the Race (2000), McWhorter presents the Cult of Victimology as the first of three manifestations in “the ideological sea of troubles plaguing black America and keeping black Americans eternally America’s case apart regardless of class” (p. xi). Separatism and anti-intellectualism, incidentally, are delineated as the other two currents of this philosophical deep.

[I]t has become a keystone of cultural blackness to treat victimhood not as a problem to be solved but as an identity to be nurtured…the grip of the Cult of Victimology encourages the black American from birth to fixate upon remnants of racism and resolutely downplay all signs of its demise. Black Americans too often teach one another to conceive of racism not as a scourge on the wane but as
an eternal pathology changing only in form and visibility, and always on the verge of getting not better but worse (McWhorter, 2000, p. xi).

While accusing others of failing to recognize the enormous achievements Blacks have made, McWhorter aggrandizes Black sociopolitical progress and understates the impact of the racism that he acknowledges. His blistering critique of the tendency of some to focus on remaining obstacles without appropriate appreciation of the substantial progress may simply be the manifestation of a philosophical difference. Indeed, I would caucus with those who are inclined to highlight problems as opposed to celebrating accomplishment—if I could only do one. For while success often speaks for itself and in many ways is its own reward, ongoing bias is far more concerning given its potential to isolate and impede Blacks. Perhaps that which strikes McWhorter as a resentful fixation is a sustained identification of racialized hurdles that stymie progress, limit outcomes, and negate racial parity. While I agree that mere bellyaching is nonproductive, calling attention to injustice anywhere is critically important to fostering justice everywhere and incrementally paving the way for greater attainment and equality.

McWhorter argues that,

Because black Americans have obviously made so very much progress since the Civil Rights Act, to adopt victimhood as an identity, a black person…must exaggerate the extent of his victimhood. The result is a Cult of Victimology, under which remnants of discrimination hold an obsessive, indignant fascination that allows only passing acknowledgement of any signs of progress (p. 2).

Moreover, according to McWhorter,
Much more often in modern black American life, victimhood is simply called attention to where it barely exists if at all. Most importantly, all too often this is done not with a view toward forging solutions, but to foster and nurture an unfocused brand of resentment and sense of alienation from the mainstream. This is Victimology (p.2).

Although he castigates “melodramatically opportunist politicians such as Al Sharpton, academic identity politics mavens such as Derrick Bell and Lani Guinier, [and] sensationalist cultural demagogues such as June Jordan,” McWhorter (2000) submits that “Victimology has become, less fervently but with profound influence nevertheless, part of the very essence of modern black identity” (p. xiii). Whilst others read such thought prevalence as the legitimate concern of a group that is disparately impacted, if not disparately treated, by the established social structures, McWhorter believes Blacks largely to be misled and confused. So though he fleetingly acknowledges that racism pervades American society, he implies that its effects are inconsequential for all who ignore them and constructively work to improve their personal lots.

Despite the parameters of his experience as a light-skinned, middle class, and only occasionally discriminated person, McWhorter absurdly declares his reality to be that of all Blacks. He leaves little room for the possibility that others have had significantly more difficult times than he. McWhorter recounts uneventful personal encounters to prove, for example, that catching a cab in New York, working and receiving promotion in the academy, and interacting socially and professionally with Whites is unproblematic. It is as if he cannot imagine, for instance, that children of the same parents can have
dramatically different realities despite apparent similarities in their daily environments. McWhorter would do well to speak his own truth and allow others to speak theirs.

The audacity with which he assigns fabrication to a student who publicly claims that a Stanford University professor told her to drop calculus because Black people are not good at math speaks volumes about McWhorter’s temperament. Indeed, the rapidity with which he discounts her story and validates the undocumented position of the White male is alarming. What would it hurt simply to be wary of the undergrad’s account while at least imagining it might be true and to wonder simultaneously whether the professor had merely been misquoted or misunderstood? Why would any rationally considerate Black person label such a narrative false *prima facie*—especially since this is not wholly uncommon fare in academia, business, politics, and society?

Why not initially deal with the story as presented? What would be wrong with saying that *if* the professor did what the student said, he was being horribly racist? This reaction leaves room for the possibility that the young womyn’s account is untrue but reiterates that biased behavior is utterly unacceptable. And instead of assuming the undergrad is exaggerating or lying, why not discuss how to effectively deal with such incidents?

Although this could have been an opportunity to share information about where to turn in such incidents, the opposite reaction is rather like informing someone who may have been sexually assaulted that they are a liar. Again, it is clearly more prudent to investigate a story than leap to conclusions. Just as defendants are innocent until proven guilty, plaintiffs are truthful until proven dishonest. And if ever I find myself unable to initially apportion equal credence to contras, in a systematically unequal environment, I will give any benefit of the doubt to the alleged victim. Why would I do otherwise when
the sum of my experience as a dark-skinned, 6’1”, 225-pound, African-American male, who grew up in the South but has worked and been educated throughout the country, suggests it is more likely that this is the reality than not?

Notwithstanding my predisposition, I would be averse to snap judgments no matter the storyteller or the facts presented. My goal is to seek truth and to advance the cause of justice. Just as I would support appropriate consequences if the student is not telling the truth, I would promote suitable punishment if it is established that the professor’s comments were unseemly. And if the truth lies somewhere in between and both parties are implicated, the situation should be handled accordingly. To definitively present this case as Blacks languishing in the Cult of Victimology is outrageous. For since McWhorter concedes that racism persists in various persons and places, it is incongruent and inconsiderate, if not downright ignorant, to instantly dismiss a claim of this nature.

And despite McWhorter’s criticisms, who says the rage of Cose’s (1993) Black middle class is all-consuming all the time? Even if every day at work and in public, for some, is a battle of sorts, why presume that these individuals characterize their entire existence as beleaguered? Patterson (1997) spends a considerable amount of time parsing surveys from the Gallup organization and the National Opinion Research Center in support of his counter victimhood claim that

[T]he great majority of Afro-Americans… are a hard-working disproportionately God-fearing, law-abiding group of people who share the same dreams as their fellow citizens, love and cherish the land of their birth…. contribute to its cultural, military, and political glory and global triumph out of all proportion to their
numbers, and, to every dispassionate observer, are, in their values, habits, ideals, and ways of living, among the most “American” of Americans (p. 171).

Indeed, McWhorter and Patterson seem to ignore or grossly underestimate the odds that Blacks are simultaneously proud, industrious, and happy Americans who have serious concerns about their systematically substandard status in the prevailing social order.

The love and companionship of family and friends can outweigh the challenges people face in other areas. Although roughly half of all Americans dislike their jobs, for example, this pervasive dissatisfaction does not automatically render these individuals perpetually and wholly despondent. Surely one can call a spade a spade without referring to an apple as an orange. To put it plainly, my national pride does not preclude me from recognizing the difficulties I face because of race. The ever-present reality of Blackness unfairly disadvantages me while privileging others, and I am not happy about it. However, I am not down and out and wallowing in despair. Instead, I work daily to overcome obstacles as my forbearers have.

I have achieved an extraordinary amount in my life even though I believe I would have achieved much more a lot more quickly if I were White. I do not, however, wish that I were White. And it’s not because I cherish the eternal tragedy of victim status as McWhorter and Patterson suggest. Rather, I love being Black because I love being me. Blackness is a fundamental and inseparable part of who and how I am. It is one of my identities and one of the lenses with and through which I see the world and live life. And it is as positive as each of my other identities. I speak out as often as I can for my rights and the rights of people who look like me, and I gladly take up the mantle for those who
appear to be very different. I am committed to social justice because everyone deserves to be treated with respect and fairness from a moral and universal perspective.

The reason I have always loved Mary J. Blige’s lyrics that “All I really want is to be happy” is because happiness means different things to different people. I recognize, indeed, that simple happiness is not the be all and end all in the realization of universal justice. After all, as wonderfully fulfilling as the joy of true happiness is, happy is an adjective that is frequently used to describe those who are desperately poor. Thus, the perception of happiness can be completely unrelated to one’s material well-being. So, in terms of socioeconomic and political fairness, happiness is not the final measure. There is no substitute for social justice. Ideally, then, people should get all that they deserve or everything they need, whichever is greater. And individuals should not be expected simply to be happy with what they have—especially if what they have is not good, right, or appropriate. Gratefulness, incidentally, is a separate issue entirely.

Though happiness when and where one is may be helpful, it need not be a barrier to the pursuit of greater contentment, especially in contexts where folks who exhibit far less dedication, effort, and intellect easily excel. An overdose of McWhorter and Patterson’s rhetoric could cause one to overlook the many affluent people in the United States and the world who are unimaginative, lazy, relatively unintelligent, and unapologetically committed to little more than living off of the wealth of their predecessors.

While McWhorter (2000) is correct that there are Blacks who scorn his perspective and refuse even to listen to him (I am friends with a few), I disagree with this approach. Though much of what McWhorter says is helpful in provoking thought and action in matters of social equality, a lot of his criticism would be more appropriately aired in the
living room of the Black community. Much like recent comments by Bill Cosby, these messages are more aptly dispensed in our churches and community centers and to parents and youth in an atmosphere of love rather than insensitively promulgated in a popular press, which hones like heat-seeking missiles on ideas that couch the disparate achievement of Blacks in ardently individualized and cultural terms. For while many in our community must do more to lift themselves, it seems more important to ensure that those who are doing all they can are justly reaping the fruits of their labor. It is challenging, after all, to convince Blacks to struggle to accomplish more when there is vast evidence that such effort does not produce equal opportunity, promotion, and pay.

McWhorter and Patterson ask a lot of Blacks given the totality of everyday experiences. They effectively characterize workplace and social racism as water that merely rolls off the back of a healthy duck. McWhorter and Patterson consequently expect Blacks not to take discrimination personally since (1) it has no power that cannot inherently be overcome and (2) it is much less intense than it has been in the past. They argue that since the rain of discrimination falls on everyone the fact that some Blacks are hugely successful proves that all can be victorious if they honestly try.

Rather than likening racism against Blacks to the idiomatic water off a duck’s back, a more apposite analogy is that of a serious snowfall on a rural community devoid of mechanical resources to clear roadways and sidewalks. Worse still, the precipitation is the recurring work of artificial snowmakers that overwhelmingly target areas populated by Blacks. The chillier the overall climate, of course, the more likely the precipitation is to cause extended difficulty. And the more fiscal and material resources individual Blacks have, the more likely they are (1) to live in predominantly White areas and be less
impacted or (2) to find ways to help themselves and others overcome the snow’s effects. Certainly it matters whether one works inside or out, whether one walks to work or drives, whether one has proper winter clothing, whether one can afford heat, and so on. And to characterize the ability of some to commission the assistance of snowplows, salt trucks, and people with shovels as inherently commonsensical and bootstrap-ish without interrogating the contrived and absurd weather is asinine. Failure to address the dearth of resources, on the one hand, and the characterization of Blacks who appear to be happy or optimistic about their chances of success and continue to find reasons to rejoice despite the circumstances, on the other, is equally ridiculous. For while it is advisable to brush the dirt off one’s shoulders, the composition of the grime has a lot to do with the success of one’s efforts and the condition of one’s garments and appendages afterwards.

Patterson (1997) is correct to some extent. Because Blacks are among the most American of Americans and have bought so fully into the ideals and proclamations of this great nation, we are loath to accept unfair treatment and passionately resist bigotry, especially where racist epithets and discriminatorily low pay are concerned.

Although McWhorter and Patterson place the onus for positive change on Blacks and while both parties have some responsibility, justice demands that those in positions of power be fair and balanced in their selections, assessments, and promotions. Justice does not require that people work hard, be superbly prepared, or strive for excellence; it does, however, dictate that those who do be compensated accordingly. The greater onus, then, is on the institutionally powerful and privileged to both level the playing field and authentically and appropriately incorporate the diversity of various communities.
Relief from the tyranny of workplace bias is linked with an increase in White progressivism. Since one is unlikely to substantially achieve simply by ignoring racist treatment and eternally turning cheeks, organizations that at least pay lip service to equality and fairness offer greater opportunities for adept Blacks to advance. Often it is a commitment to workplace justice at upper administration levels that triggers fundamental change. Consider the new Denny’s Restaurants versus the legendary bigotry of their former incarnation or the increasingly femyle- and multi-culturally-infused management of today’s Wal-Mart as opposed to the insular behemoth that has morphed in the wake of several historic lawsuits.

While I insist it is principally the responsibility of mainstream executives to right present wrongs, I agree with McWhorter and Patterson that Blacks who have reached middle and upper management via effort, outcomes, and attitudes are well positioned to convince the establishment that they and others are capable and worthy of leadership. Changing attitudes from the top down is not only more practical, it is quite effective at positively altering the nature of organizational structures. Because higher ups can set, monitor, and enforce corporate policy, they are the most productive pressure points for the promotion of organizational justice. Although it may also be effective to spur attitudinal change from the bottom up, where Blacks are disproportionately represented, it takes a lot more time and effort because there are vastly more people to convince even as there, arguably, are more strongly held prejudices.

Though many are tired of hearing about the challenges Blacks face, I am much more concerned with the weariness and disparate realities of all who repeatedly encounter discrimination. Thus, where Patterson and McWhorter see victimhood and a Cult of
Victimology resulting in inaction and permanent under class status, I see the vigilant and critical delineation of racial and ethnic victimization that identifies evil, reminds the nation of its commitment to justice for all, and, ultimately, increases the likelihood that fair-minded Americans counter injustice with equal access.

Despite the highly suspect nature of some of McWhorter’s Articles of Faith (2000), there is no doubt that the mantra of happiness and hope is ubiquitous in the call and response of Black religious tradition; the overriding message of hip-hop, R&B, and rap music; and the hordes of Black students who matriculate into our nation’s colleges and universities each year. Even as I relentlessly advocate social justice, my vision of utopia is not a society of absolutely equal outcomes but one where the anatomy of individual status is the consequence of personal enterprise. True meritocracy is the ideal.

*Black Managerial Resolution*

Although McWhorter misreads and overstates the rage that Cose (1993) documents, the current study suggests that upper middle class and upper class Blacks in hospitality and tourism uniformly exhibit resolution as opposed to rage. Though they occasionally encounter serious bouts of workplace discrimination and are more commonly frustrated by subtle racial and/or gender politics, they have mostly resolved to ignore prejudice and partner with the good among their White counterparts and the power elite to continually achieve despite the unique challenges with which they are confronted.

*Perpetual Proportionate Affirmative Action*

In contrast to Patterson’s (1997) proposal to phase out affirmative action in the next few years or so and contrary to McWhorter’s (2000) suggestion to immediately discontinue it in most instances while retaining it for a limited amount of time in areas
such as business, I am a strong proponent of *perpetual proportionate affirmative action*. Rather than ending affirmative action before an ideal balance is achieved as McWhorter proposes, I argue that it should always be used to maintain proportional representation of racial, ethnic, and other groups at all levels of employment and management. Instead of focusing on equal opportunity per se, this emphasis on proportional representation is appropriate because while it may not be equal, it is fair.

One’s particular background should matter since the organizational ideal is to mirror the populations of the areas in which they are located. Recognizing that all industries may not appeal equally to all groups, however, the goal simply should be to actively recruit and hire qualified applicants from applicable subsets. And whether this policy advantages a Black female in Anchorage, a White male in Detroit, an Asian female in Birmingham, or a Hispanic male in Pittsburgh, the goal is to synergistically engage the entire community. When and wherever things are unbalanced, then, strategies and resources should be directed toward equalization.

Also, I agree with Patterson (1997) that class is a useful basis for affirmative action. So long as qualification remains the threshold for consideration, I support perpetually proportionate class-based policies designed to insure all sectors of our society are fully engaged in academic and business affairs.

*Strategies for Black Socioeconomic Progress*

Because I object to Patterson and McWhorter’s heavy-handed attack on Blacks for failing to aggressively grab the bull by the horns, as it were, I identify three strategies for advancement. First, it is critical that Blacks and others adequately call attention to racial and ethnic victimization when and wherever it manifests. Discrimination, sadly, is real
and exacts complex penalties on the everyday experiences and life chances of its victims. These consequences must be identified, delineated, and understood to sufficiently reverse the effects and enable all to enjoy the fruits of their preparation and labor.

Second, it is hugely important that we urge each other from childhood forward to take the initiative, expend the effort, and continually strive for excellence despite the persistence of racial and ethnic obstacles. Note that there are three important elements here: (1) Taking the initiative involves seizing helpful opportunities, accepting calculated risks, and stepping up to the proverbial plate with commitment and confidence, (2) Expending the effort entails putting in the requisite work to prepare oneself for difficult tasks, rolling up one’s sleeves as necessary and working smart and hard, and going the extra mile consistently and with enthusiasm, and (3) Continually striving for excellence in spite of the obstacles. Just as surely as it is unhelpful to dwell on the existence of unfortunate ethnic and racial realities, the dogged persistence of inequity, unfairness, and discrimination cannot be minimized or glossed over. These barriers must be recognized and addressed, and one of the most effective rebuttals is individual job excellence.

Finally, I agree with Patterson and McWhorter that it is imperative to denounce victimhood or the Cult of Victimology wherever it actually exists. This, however, is a living room issue that should be addressed in churches, community centers, barbershops and beauty salons, and wherever else we find ourselves essentially alone. While we certainly should not encourage fellow Blacks to engage in nonproductive bellyaching, it is critical to take the guilty to task directly because of the tendency of public approaches to provide unrighteous cover for ignoramuses and racists to unduly blame all Blacks for their disparate socioeconomic status.
Patterson (1997) accuses the mainstream Black leadership of “promoting a highly deterministic ideology of victimhood among their constituents” (p. 123). He asserts, moreover, that “In a free, democratic, capitalist society that thrives mainly on the initiative and sense of—indeed, strong belief in and commitment to the dogma of—self-determination, a leader’s role is to encourage individuals to think only in these terms” (p. 123). Part of the problem, of course, is that American society is not purely free, democratic, nor capitalist. Though we purport to embody these ideals, we, in actuality, are quasi-free, alarmingly plutocratic, and capitalistic only insofar as the patrician interests of our socially stratified status quo are served. Although Patterson refers to the U.S. as “a very successful plutocratic democracy with a highly engaged elite public, a vigilant press, and a largely demobilized mass electorate whose rights and freedoms are constitutionally protected” (p. 10), our nepotistic and effectively racist society is built on a patriarchal and overwhelmingly Black-White socio-historical foundation that must constantly be mended in order to rightly stand the test of time.

While few treat the racialized reality as overly deterministic, most view the naming of social racial evil as an integral part of problem identification and see its successful redress as key to holistic resolution. For while effective and largely stratified solutions exist otherwise, denying insidious discrimination and relying exclusively on arduous, Herculean, and protracted effort is grossly unfair, debilitating, and incredibly difficult to achieve and to sustain. Since it is not what the majority is expected to do, moreover, it cannot stand unchallenged as requisite for Blacks.

According to Patterson (1997),
to the degree that [the Afro-American leadership] encourage Afro-American
individuals to adopt an ethic of determinism and victimhood, in which their very
self-esteem requires a commitment to the belief that they have no control over
their lives, they disastrously mislead those who need, above all else, to know and
believe that only they can change their own lives (p. 123).

This is a problematic argument based on a misinterpretation of the intended message.
It is like saying only Rosa Parks could change whether sxe was able to retain her seat on
a public bus in the segregated South. Not only must we remember that sxe was carted off
to jail, but we must consider that sxe was by no means the first to resist in this manner.
Sometimes in an effort to survive, people choose the easier or safer road. For even though
there were multiple accounts of Blacks who refused to give up seats, almost every single
Black person chose to obey the established social and legal standards.

So, while Blacks like Rosa Parks exercised a modicum of control over their lives and
destinies, history details the unfortunate consequences of their actions. Nevertheless, the
overarching theme of the marching masses of the Civil Rights movement was that “We
shall overcome.” The point was not that no obstacles existed or that they could not be
surmounted, but that the impediments could and would be conquered even though Blacks
were routinely victimized. Let us remember, also, that it was not Rosa Parks alone but an
entire multicultural movement and the eventual acquiescence of the predominantly White
power structure that changed the rules.

Patterson and McWhorter would have us believe that Blacks languish in victimhood
if they find it incredibly difficult to get ahead in our racist society. The reality as
Patterson only occasionally acknowledges is that the circumstances for some are horribly
challenging. While it may seem unhelpful to point out that there are situations where racist barriers will almost certainly block progression no matter what one does, this must be appreciated and vigorously countered in order to bring about change. Where business has racial equivalents to Black Baptist churches in which womyn categorically cannot become pastor or even speak from the main pulpit, for example, such injustices and disparities must be challenged and redressed. Thankfully, the power of positive resolution rests in a modern interpretation of the Constitution via Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which espouses equality in terms of age, color, gender, national origin, race, and religion.

Rather than blaming Black leaders and White liberals for propagating defeatism, championing unfettered access will result in greater levels of achievement and accomplishment since a significant portion of the community will always follow the established rules and struggle to do what is expected. I am inclined, therefore, to concentrate on fixing ethnic and racial problems everywhere they materialize. Given the debate and disagreement about lower class Blacks and the barriers to their success, my research focuses on middle and upper class Blacks who have obtained great educations, acquired high levels of experience, extended themselves in good faith to peers, and consistently worked to produce excellent outcomes for their respective firms. For if they continue to face particularized challenges in significant numbers, it is clear that persistent social and workplace bias is the greater problem.

The reason I interrogate this aspect of reality though I think it also important to focus elsewhere is because Americans have repeatedly and unequivocally expressed their commitment to fairness and equality. Public debate, indeed, has been about what the right thing to do is and how best to accomplish it as opposed to whether it should be done.
While I agree with Patterson (1997) that “the record of the past half century has been one of great achievement” (p. viii) and “there is no room for complacency: because our starting point half a century ago was so deplorably backward, we still have some way to go before approaching…a resolution” (p. ix), I vehemently disagree that this nation’s racial crisis “is as much one of perception and interpretation as of socioeconomic and interethnic realities” (p. viii). Because race is a significantly reliable predictor of socioeconomic status, I have real issues. Although Blacks have undeniably made great gains, we remain at the lowest rungs of society; and our status does not seem haphazard. Because we appear systematically to be represented at lower levels despite educational attainment, for instance, I see our continuing, though waning, crisis as proof of interethnic complexity and the persistence of White privilege and Black bias.

Interestingly, perpetual proportionate affirmative action fulfills the dual aims of Patterson’s (1997) vision of systematically reducing inequality and “greatly increasing cross-pollination of…multiethnic communities” (p. 157). Consistently engaging diverse groups at work ultimately fosters mutual respect, familiarity and trust, and a wider exchange of knowledge and perspectives. And the dynamism of increasingly authentic relationships oozes into non-work time and moves us closer to Patterson’s *ecumenical America*—an “overarching national culture [that is] the envy of the world” (p. 157).

As Patterson suggests, being educated, experienced, and excellent at what one does typically is not sufficient for Blacks in predominantly White contexts. Such preparation and proficiency rarely result in the manifestation of Black managers and executives in numbers consistent with their organizational representation. The reality is that “when firms promote workers they consider not simply the characteristics of employees, but
organizational criteria, among the most important of which is the degree to which a candidate for promotion will fit into the upper echelon for which he or she is being considered” (Patterson, 1997, p. 161). I agree with Patterson that the simple humyn behavior principle of homophyly, which suggests that individuals with similar attributes are likely to get along better and to develop more effective work groups, routinely leads non-malicious decision makers to disproportionately promote Whites. As well, this sentiment is variously expressed by respondents of the current study.

While the affirmative action I espouse also demands new and better rules for the holistic inclusion of diverse groups, I insist that excellence and high standards truly become the hallmark of corporate America. For, as Patterson states,

[T]he redefinition of rules in no way entails a lessening of standards or the abandonment of the merit principle. I am not proposing that we do away with rules and structures, but that we redefine them in a manner that makes it possible for those now excluded to play by them. I am, in short, urging a commitment to the very values that critics of affirmative action insist on, a genuine universalization of the rules of conduct. Such a universalization cannot stop short of the rules by which we change the rules (p. 165).

*Morality and the Acknowledgement of Victimization*

Patterson (1997) is fundamentally concerned that

[A] deterministic framework accepts and accentuates the moral superiority of the victimizer. As long as one…has to appeal to the moral sense and mercy of another person, one remains, almost by definition, morally compromised. The victim’s cry for help and mercy concedes the nobility of the oppressor: Why should the man
who has enslaved and exploited you respond to your cry unless, far from being an immoral tyrant, he has more than a spark of magnanimity?

Furthermore, to constantly explain…one’s failure as being produced by one’s environment, or worse, as the doing of another “race” or class, either directly or through the system it controls, is to reduce oneself to the level of an object, and…prolong one’s dependency on that other group or environment. (pp. 94-95).

Not only is the acknowledgement of victimization not inexorably deterministic, as discussed, but taking the victimizers to task does not establish their moral superiority. While morality involves adherence to universal values, the delineation of victimization in the American context rationally concedes that power is overwhelmingly White. And even though Patterson ghastly argues that appealing to “the moral sense and mercy” of Whites renders Blacks morally compromised, it no more does this than it patently signifies Blacks’ moral superiority. This is the social conundrum that has fueled patriarchy and White privilege since the birth of our nation. The power elite have nothing more to gain from doing the right thing than the altruistic knowledge of the act, the intangible benefit of moral alignment, and the true fulfillment of our founding declaration. Is that not enough? Arguments to the contrary demonstrate the need for a paradigm shift in national thought. The beauty of humynity, as Patterson snidely implies, is that everyone has “a spark of magnanimity.” Indeed, it is these embers that fuel the hope of a ravenous moral fire that purges the humyn soul and propagates universal peace and goodwill.

As Patterson deftly indicates, this country now belongs to all of us. Vociferously confronting structural discrimination, therefore, is less about holding a White social system responsible for constrained Black achievement and more about embracing our
powerful status as heirs of the American dream and boldly insisting that its ideals appropriately represent and benefit everyone.

Relativism and Social Equity

Another major departure from Patterson and McWhorter is my evaluation of Black status relative to mainstream and White attainment rather than the percentage who have become middle-class. In fact, I would not be satisfied if all Blacks achieved middle-class status if the median level was upper middle class or higher because relativity is a more accurate measure of social fairness. While I am concerned about the lopsided number of Black children in poverty and committed to ensuring that Blacks have all they need to painlessly survive, it is hugely important that Blacks’ preparation, work ethic, and success is duly rewarded by business and society. We must tackle the challenges of every sector of our community. Indeed, my overall concern renders me just as interested in addressing the number of Black homeless men on the streets of Harlem as I am about aiding a Black surgeon at Manhattan’s Lennox Hill Hospital who earns 28% less than her equally credentialed and experienced counterparts.

Black Managers as Victims and Victors

A central message of this study is that its participants are simultaneously and alternately victims and victors. While none is dour enough to self-identify as such, their documented status as disparately impacted and treated within and/or without their firms solely because of Blackness belies the indubitable reality of their objective success. Indeed, these adept managers have utilized the AADERE model of success to surmount racial barriers and substantially achieve.
And for those who cannot help but think that if these individuals were not Black they might not have accomplished as much, recall that each has White bosses and counterparts who are less discriminated, experienced, and excellent though they boast more robust relationships. Clearly these participants are among the best hospitality has to offer. Let us hope, then, that our increasingly fair and balanced business and social arenas affirm universal access, authentically and impartially nurture and prepare talent, and steadfastly reward merit over nepotism not only to broaden these individuals’ horizons but also to spawn diverse generations of exceptional leadership.

Relationships

Although it was clear from the outset that cross-cultural relationships would likely be important in understanding the experience of HSBHTPs, it did not occur to me that managerial respondents would commonly conceptualize this as mentorship and sponsorship. These concepts repeatedly surfaced, however, as hugely important to long term career progression. Without them, participants largely intimated that their ascension would have been considerably slower and far less impressive. Though respondents universally consider themselves extraordinarily talented and accomplished, they suggest that quality feedback, guidance, and access to increasingly higher planes to demonstrate one’s capabilities are crucial to ongoing success—especially in light of workplace bias.

In the context of the AADERE model of success, relationships are a critical area of awareness for HSBHTP aspirants. The relationships respondents most commonly referenced can be classified into four basic forms or ships: (1) citizenship, (2) comradeship, (3) mentorship, and (4) sponsorship.
Citizenship

Citizenship is the most basic iteration of relationship in an individual firm, a parent company, a specific industry, or the world of business as a whole. As members of any of the aforementioned, participants hope and expect that collegiality will be extended as they offer the same. Citizenship requires/anticipates nothing more than fundamental humyn decency. Where people are not inherently bigoted, malicious, or jaded, the expectation of citizenship is that others will do whatever they reasonably can to assist those around them. Irrespective of racial, ethnic, gender, national origin, or other background, general humyn kindness is the business default. And in absence of hurtful or harmful acts from others, people tend to do whatever they can out of respect for self and others. Participants repeatedly spoke about their exercises in organizational citizenship as well as small acts of kindness received.

Comradeship

Comradeship among Black managers is more refined in that it is specifically directed toward other Blacks. It revolves around representation and a realization that the White power structure (1) links the individual behavior of Black employees and managers and (2) effectively treats them in the same alien way as underrepresented members of the same group. It emanates from a collective Black responsibility and a sense that sticking together is an expected, if not critical, element in organizational survival.

Comradeship has two distinct dimensions. On the one hand, there is an internal sense that while the primary job aim is personal success, secondarily it is helpful and heartening to do what one can to help those with whom one is most similar. Alternatively, there is the visceral feeling that without other Blacks one is, in a particular
way, alone. While there may be an external observation that Blacks are maliciously, secretly, and suspiciously bonding for some specified purpose, a more benign explanation might parallel the instant connection between two Americans (regardless of race and gender) who end up working in China where everyone else is from the local community and speaks Mandarin as a first language.

Comradeship is alternately described by respondents as an existent reality and a hopeful state that can spur Black growth. Just as Kelly serves as the de facto go to person for Blacks in a specialized training program in her company, others discuss the dearth of Black executives and delineate personal deeds for improvement in their contexts. Most agree that an expanding web of comradeship will steer more Blacks into top leadership.

While comradeship may sound like some secret strategy Blacks hope to utilize to privilege themselves among the working and managerial masses, several participants state that such relationships are rampant and hugely effective for White males and others in business. Still, it is difficult to establish how different comradeship is from the old boy networks, old girl networks, and other insular cliques disparaged by respondents.

**Mentorship and Sponsorship**

While mentorship and sponsorship have been discussed at length, it is important to emphasize that they are fairly distinct from citizenship and comradeship. Though relationships that begin as citizenship or comradeship may morph into mentorship and/or sponsorship, mentorship and sponsorship are progressively refined iterations of relationships that have profound meaning for mentees and benefactors, in particular. While citizenship and comradeship refer to broad and immediate relationships among groups that can have particular effects on individuals, mentorship and sponsorship is
about hugely individualized connections between persons with lots of information, tenure, authority, and/or position advising and sharing knowledge or paving ways and securing opportunity for relative neophytes. Mentorship, specifically, revolves around enrichment and helping people obtain information about how to effectively operate within particular contexts. Sponsorship, on the other hand, is less about molding and shaping and more about recognizing talent and potential and vouching or otherwise providing individuals with opportunities to demonstrate skill.

The mentorship and sponsorship literature contains general information about these processes and particularized data regarding the experiences and needs of mainstream and minority mentors and sponsors as well as mentees and beneficiaries from diverse backgrounds. Whereas several mentorship/sponsorship articles focus mainly on mentors (Gentry, Weber, & Sadri, 2008; Jeste, Twamley, Cardenas, Lebowitz, & Reynolds, 2009; Lentz & Allen, 2009; Mysyk, 2008; Parise & Forret, 2008; Wiltshier, 2007), some principally discuss mentee or protégé concerns (Barnett, 2006; Berta, 2007; Feeney & Bozeman, 2008; Files, Blair, Mayer, & Ko’s, 2008; Lee, Theoharis, Fitzpatrick, Kim, Liss, Nix-Williams, Griswold, & Walther-Thomas, 2006; Ortiz-Walters, 2009; Nguyen, Huynh, & Lonergan-Garwick, 2007), while others attempt to adequately address both parties’ issues (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006; Kay & Wallace, 2007; Oglensky, 2008; Simon, Roff, & Perry, 2008; Thomas, 1993; Walker, 2008; Wood & Leck 2008).

Race and culture are two key mentoring factors that are particularly relevant to the current study. And while the bulk of cited articles generically references mentorship participants (Allen et al, 2006; Berta, 2007; Feeney & Bozeman, 2008; Files et al, 2008; Kay & Wallace, 2007; Lee et al, 2006; Lentz & Allen, 2009; Oglensky, 2008; Ortiz-
Walters, 2009; Parise & Forret, 2008; Wiltshier, 2007; Wood & Leck, 2008), one examines cross-cultural mentoring via a large international sample (Gentry et al, 2008), one explores domestically- and foreign-initiated Asian/Pacific Islander issues (Nguyen et al, 2007), one involves the shared perspective of U.S. ethnic minorities (Jeste et al, 2009), and several pointedly investigate Black concerns (Barnett, 2006; Simon et al, 2008; Thomas, 1993; Walker, 2008).

Like race and culture, gender is a major dimension of difference that can significantly impact mentoring outcomes. While a few researchers highlight gender-based mentorship distinctions (Feeney & Bozeman, 2008; Kay & Wallace, 2007; Ortiz-Walters, 2009), several scholars expressly interrogate the femyle mentee/mentor experience (Barnett, 2006; Berta, 2007; Files et al, 2008; Mysyk, 2008; Simon et al, 2008; Walker, 2008).

Finally, in each of the studies reviewed, mentorship style is complexly linked to the mechanics and results of the mentoring process. Although authors most commonly research formal arrangements (Allen et al, 2006; Files et al, 2008; Gentry et al, 2008; Jeste et al, 2009; Lee et al, 2006; Parise & Forret, 2008), informal (Oglensky, 2008; Mysyk, 2008; Wiltshier, 2007) and combination mentoring settings are also investigated (Berta, 2007; Feeney & Bozeman, 2008; Kay & Wallace, 2007; Wood & Leck 2008).

Mentorship and Sponsorship Defined

The articles cited in this section provide several definitions along with rich background information and nuanced conceptualizations of mentorship, sponsorship, and related terms. Both Gentry et al (2008) and Jeste et al (2009), for example, link the label mentor to Homer’s Odyssey, which describes the character Mentor as a wise and trusted counselor. Jeste et al also delineate essential components of mentoring established by
other researchers: a learning partnership, the support mentors provide mentees, and a
mentor-mentee association that is unique and mutual but asymmetric and variable. Jeste et al portray mentorships as simultaneously professional and personal bonds and stress that mentors typically fulfill a number of valuable support functions.

The most consistent conceptualization of mentoring involves a traditional dyadic model where an experienced mentor is matched with a less experienced protégé primarily to dispense ongoing career function and psychosocial support for the latter’s professional and/or personal advancement (Feeney & Bozeman, 2008; Files et al, 2008; Kay & Wallace, 2007; Lee et al, 2006; Lentz & Allen, 2009; Nguyen et al, 2007; Ortiz-Walters, 2009; Parise & Forret, 2008; Simon et al, 2008; Thomas, 1993; Wiltshier, 2007; Wood & Leck, 2008). Mentoring career functions operate at the organizational and system level. These responsibilities comprise the more objective elements of mentorship, aid mentees in accessing and negotiating organizational structures, and help ensure high-quality learning and visibility. Typical examples include arranging challenging assignments, coaching, creating exposure, giving tangible assistance with new tasks, helping develop suitable professional goals and priorities, incorporating protégés in important professional activities, providing protection, and sponsoring mentees. Alternatively, psychosocial mentoring increases protégés’ self-worth by instilling feelings of competence and affirming identity. And psychosocial functions encompass behaviors like being friendly, counseling, demonstrating positive regard, providing acceptance and validation, and role modeling (Lentz & Allen, 2009; Parise & Forret, 2008; Simon et al, 2008).

Secondarily, however, there is an increasingly common expectation that mentoring relationships must also advantage mentors (Allen et al, 2006; Feeney & Bozeman, 2008;
Researchers delineate a host of mentor benefits that can result from ideal mentorship conditions: enhanced status among peers and managers; feelings of generativity, or immortality, and purpose from watching mentees thrive; fewer turnover intentions; a greater sense of accomplishment and value of work; higher job satisfaction and motivation; improved job performance; increased organizational commitment; intrinsic satisfaction from helping mentees navigate the organizational environment; more positive job attitudes and behaviors; mutual liking, identification, and attraction; organizational advancement; perception as better performer by superiors; and reduced negative effects from job content plateauing (Allen et al, 2006; Feeney & Bozeman, 2008; Gentry et al, 2008; Lentz & Allen, 2009; Parise & Forret, 2008).

Tertiary scholarly dimensions of mentoring include peer mentoring, an alternative to the conventional dyadic model (Files et al, 2008); the social capital aspect, which emphasizes how mentors boost mentee social capital resources by making personal introductions, sharing contacts, and stimulating network ties (Feeney & Bozeman, 2008); mentorship collaborations, or mentor-protégé interactions that foster mutual work objectives and beget personal learning (Ortiz-Walters, 2009); frequent interchangeable use of the terms *mentor* and *sponsor* to denote senior organizational or professional persons who educate, encourage, and support less seasoned colleagues (Nguyen et al, 2007); as well as distinctive conceptualizations of mentors as experienced individuals who offer friendship and psychosocial support along with instrumental career guidance versus sponsors, or superior leaders who only provide career support like coaching, feedback, and promotion advocacy (Thomas, 1993). While I view mentorship
collaboration and social capital-informed exchange as critical to effective mentoring relationships, see practical and productive applications for peer mentoring, and indistinguishably use *mentor* and *sponsor* largely because of the imprecise literature, Thomas’ distinctive conceptualization of these terms reflects my fundamental perspective and echoes feedback from several respondents in the current study.

Jeste et al (2009) indicate that the discrepancy between the U.S. ethnic minority population and the representation of individuals from these groups in mental health research is largely due to a paucity of mentors. Not only do they suggest that mentorship, often by two or more individuals, is critical in such contexts, but they maintain that mentoring competence can and should be assessed and enhanced. They assert, moreover, that institutions should work together to implement national- and local-level initiatives that help cultivate and incentivize mentors who work with ethnic minority junior scientists. Jeste, et al, encourage and propose enhanced recruitment, retention, and training methods for mentors of ethnic minorities. The takeaway is that a greater willingness among those in power to authentically mentor Black aspirants will lead to an increase in the population. And the more those in positions of power and authority with positional expertise and institutional knowledge share, the better prepared these individuals will be to successfully achieve and mentor others.

Lee et al (2006) submit that mentoring is a critical component of teacher induction programs given the multifaceted challenges beginning teachers face. By boosting early-career teachers’ satisfaction and self-assurance, Lee et al believe mentoring can help ease attrition. Though the focus here is on teachers and education, the broader message is that mentorship is instrumental in orienting newcomers, enhancing their confidence and job
satisfaction, and, thereby, bolstering their retention. Participants in the current study suggest that effective mentoring not only increases the likelihood that they will remain with their companies but exponentially improves their career progression possibilities.

Wood and Leck (2008) focus on dysfunctional workplace mentoring by analyzing various types of negative mentor-protégé experiences. Building on Baugh and Fagenson-Eland’s (2005) work, they discuss four mentoring relationship forms: (1) formal-internal, (2) formal-external, (3) informal-internal, and (4) informal-external. While Wood and Leck indicate that each requires a distinctive style of mentoring partnership, they note that internal settings are more conducive to mentorship development. They discuss the process via Kram’s (1983) basic mentoring relationship phases: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition, which occurs only if mentor-protégé relationships evolve into peer-like friendships.

While informal, internal relationships, which transform into equal-footed friendships are most effective, each of the Black managerial success-common relationships I identify—citizenship, comradeship, mentorship, and sponsorship—can morph into friendship, as friendship per se is not a prerequisite. Certainly, however, it can enhance any of the aforementioned relationships and generate more productive outcomes for all involved. Authentic friendship is ideal, in part, because it guards against such dysfunctional mentoring results as diminished self-esteem, greater voluntary turnover, increased anxiety and stress, less commitment to the organization, lower job satisfaction, more requests for transfers and reassignments, more work-family conflict, and reduced independence or learned helplessness (Wood & Leck, 2008).
Echoing Eby and Allen (2002), Wood and Leck (2008) state that there are no significant correlations among outcomes like wage and advancement rates with various negative mentoring experiences and that mentoring relationships established via formal programs have more harmful effects for protégés than those initiated informally. This finding is remarkable and counterintuitive since one would expect dysfunctional mentoring to result in lower compensation and fewer or less substantive promotions for mentees whether it occurred in formal or informal contexts.

Wood and Leck (2008) recommend that mentoring relationships be carefully fashioned so that they reflect both parties’ objectives; they are sufficiently long term; they are free from destructive behaviors, and they support mutual development. While acknowledging potential organizational resource limitations, they delineate a host of best practices: interviewing candidates to recruit mentors; administering psychological tests to establish participant program suitability; administering personality tests to optimally pair individuals; training mentors and protégés in communication, listening, interpersonal, and related skills; introducing mentors and protégés; opening a dialogue about possible relationship challenges; discussing any applicable relationship boundaries; monitoring mentors and protégés; intervening in the mentoring process if a negative experience is observed; and helping terminate the relationship should it become necessary.

In their examination of the mentoring dyad in managerial or supervisory domains, Gentry et al (2008) investigate how the mentoring manager benefits from the process and how societal culture affects the mentoring relationship. They find that managers who direct reports rate as engaged in such career-related mentoring behaviors as sponsorship, coaching, and giving challenging assignments are seen as superior performers by their
bosses. Gentry, et al, determine, moreover, that Performance Orientation, one of the nine GLOBE societal culture dimensions is “a significant cross-level moderator of the career-related mentoring–performance relationship.” And while they state that managers who mentor their subordinates affect such important protégé outcomes as job performance, organizational commitment, satisfaction, and turnover intention, Gentry, et al are more interested in the increased personal and job satisfaction that mentors themselves experience plus the potential for objective and subjective mentor career success as well as job attitudes and reduced job content plateauing that other researchers have uncovered.

Ultimately, Gentry et al (2008) support the notion of mentor development for improved performance. They submit that the mentorship process enables mentoring managers to build valuable interpersonal skills including the ability to effectively develop and communicate with others and to provide constructive feedback. Indeed, Gentry et al amplify previous research findings that mentoring managers’ understanding of others can be enriched by mentoring relationship diversity. They posit, in fact, that the higher boss-ratings of managerial performance they observe are linked, in part, to the development of key managerial skills by mentoring managers. And though these findings are based on a large international sample, it may be that cross-cultural mentorship in today’s hospitality organizations will render mentoring managers more knowledgeable about social subcultures and better positioned to help their companies and themselves successfully achieve. This potentially provides an incentive for the disproportionately White and male executive establishment to authentically mentor Black aspirants.

The premise of Files et al’s (2008) work is that female physicians employed in academic medical practices attain associate professor or professor status at lower rates
than comparably senior male colleagues and inadequate mentoring may be one of the reasons why. In addition to academic rank inequity, Files et al state that womyn doctors continue to experience compensation disparity and elevated attrition rates relative to men. Since they found that the number of womyn in their research context who desired mentors far exceeded the number who felt sufficiently skilled or available to serve, they developed a facilitated peer mentoring program where junior femyle faculty functioned as their own peer mentoring team. And senior womyn, or facilitator mentors, served as mentors to the entire collective.

Interestingly, no formal mentoring preparation was offered, no financial incentives or release time was provided, and the program’s support and structure came from the different skills and experiences the facilitator mentors brought to the group. The idea of peer mentoring, an alternative to the conventional dyadic model, evolved from socialized gender differences and the thought that femyles may respond more effectively to collaboration, encouragement, and group affiliation, whereas men may place more value on competition, challenge, and individual accomplishment.

After 10 months of facilitated peer mentoring, a self-assessment posttest of the peer mentor group revealed a 30% improvement overall on three key indicators: (1) satisfaction with academic accomplishments, (2) achievement of the requisite skills for desired academic promotion, and (3) the belief that they possessed the essential writing skills. And at the conclusion of the one year peer mentoring program, all of the members of the productive team except for one who went on maternity leave chose to continue to collaborate on future academic projects.
A facilitated peer mentoring program may work for Black aspirants in predominantly White settings since many of the male-femyle inequities in Files et al’s (2008) study mirror the Black-White disparities present in hospitality management. Moreover, several of the HSBHTPs in the current study reference the desire, responsibility, and potential effectiveness of senior Black managers mentoring and sponsoring newcomers both inside and outside their organizations. And since available time is often an issue for these professionals, informally facilitating a collective of peer mentors could amplify their efforts, ease their burdens, and provide neophytes with multiple opportunities for institutional support and knowledge acquisition. Such a model of encouragement, collaboration, and group affiliation may help prepare aspirants for internal and external challenges, sharpen their competitive edge, and foster individual achievement and advancement. While almost all of the participants in the current study report that they have significantly benefited from multiple mainstream, senior mentors, a Black-oriented facilitated peer mentoring program could productively enhance existing comradeships and appreciably increase Black managerial retention and success rates.

Parise and Forret (2008) focus mainly on mentor effects. They examine four formal mentoring program aspects: (1) the degree to which mentor involvement is voluntary, (2) the level of input mentors have in pairings with protégés, (3) the perceived efficacy of mentor training, and (4) the perceived intensity of upper management support for the program. Parise and Forret conclude that voluntary mentor participation is positively associated with perceiving rewarding experiences and negatively associated with being more trouble than it was worth. They find that matching process input is negatively linked with nepotism, and perceptions of training efficacy are positively linked with
generativity—the sense of immortality from watching mentees excel or the ability to leave a legacy by affecting future personnel. Finally, Parise and Forret determine, perceived management support is positively associated with rewarding experiences and recognition, and negatively associated with generativity and bad reflection.

Parise and Forret (2008) feel examination of the aforementioned factors is necessary to increase the appeal of formal mentoring programs and attract more mentors. Their findings certainly suggest that voluntary mentor participation, high levels of matching process input, effective training programs for mentors, and strong levels of upper management support are ideal in the establishment of formal mentoring. Thus, when and where structured hospitality management mentoring programs are sought, such strategies should aid the development and progression of first-rate Black talent.

Barnett (2006) discusses the _multiple jeopardy_ Black professional womyn often encounter because of gender, race, and class issues. Focusing on academia, sxe notes that the degree of workplace collegiality can significantly impact the experiences of Black femyle faculty. Beyond heavy teaching loads plus intense committee service and access issues around requisite research-, teaching-, and service-resources, Barnett contends a dearth of influential allies, mentors, and sponsors; exclusion from collegial information networks; and rare appointments to visible leadership posts leave Black womyn faculty not only marginalized and relatively invisible but also disadvantaged at promotion and tenure. Arguing that Black womyn bring tremendous talent and expertise to campus life, Barnett concludes the myriad challenges of racism, sexism, and classism make it difficult to excel at advising, mentoring, publishing, research, service, and teaching. And sxe calls
for strong and aggressive campus leadership and proactive strategies at micro-individual and macro-institutional levels to effectively address Black femyle faculty realities.

The universal engagement of particularized and proactive individual and corporate strategies, indeed, could level the playing field and help Blacks, womyn, and others maximize personal potential while spurring organizations toward greater social understanding and optimal business success. And since the multiple jeopardy Black womyn face in academe is similar to the complex challenges of underrepresented Black managers in mainstream, managerial hospitality, genuine access to powerful mentors and sponsors as well as information networks will almost certainly lead to the moderation of discrimination and higher levels of inclusion, achievement, visibility, and advancement.

Beginning with the notion that improved network ties are generally advantageous for mentees, Feeney and Bozeman (2008) investigate mentorship variation and social capital. They are concerned with whether creating new contacts and network ties is a major mentoring focus and, if so, whether that emphasis is on contacts within the protégé’s establishment, outside the establishment, or both. While Feeney and Bozeman’s findings reveal that the genders of protégés and mentors do not influence the amount of network ties presented, they conclude that relationships where protégé and mentor gender match generate more network ties. Contrary to expectation, however, they find no significant difference in the quantity and emphasis of network ties resulting from formal, company sanctioned programs and informal mentoring. An obvious takeaway is that continually enhanced social capital should be a central focal point for formal and informal corporate mentoring programs, whether their focus is internal or external, since the ongoing impartation of new contacts and network ties undoubtably benefits Black aspirants whose
minority status and cultural distinctions render them less likely to possess the social and institutional connections critical to long term career progression.

In Berta’s (2007) special report on womyn in foodservice, informal conversations reveal that management remains male-dominated and womyn are still far from attaining parity with men in the industry’s executive suites and boardrooms although there is an increasing number of femyle executives interested in helping newcomers achieve. Moreover, Berta reports, there are fewer barriers since it has become easier for womyn to obtain mentors who can assist them.

Though sxe indicates that lots of the womyn leading businesses today had male career mentors, Berta (2007) implies that the growth of senior femyle managers translates into a larger reserve of guidance for womyn on the rise. That said, another emergent message is that gender per se is irrelevant to the extent that simply having a mentor is what is fundamentally important. Berta notes, indeed, that it is the presence of effective mentors early in a womyn’s life that makes the difference. It does not necessarily matter whether those confidantes are parents, school teachers, femyle executives, male colleagues or bosses, or someone else, what matters most is that they are there. And while higher numbers of executive womyn and an increase in formal mentoring programs means there are better opportunities to find corporate mentors, Berta insists that womyn still need to speak up and request the assistance that they need.

Berta (2007) argues that when companies institute mentoring programs it results in greater percentages of senior-level womyn. Sxe cites a 2006 study by Catalyst which found that the nine accommodations and foodservice firms ranked in the Fortune 500
outpace the pack with femyles accounting for 20.6% of corporate officers and 15.8% of board members versus 15.6% and 14.6%, respectively, for all Fortune 500 firms.

The picture of foodservice womyn that Berta (2007) paints parallels femyles in the current study and is similar to all participants’ experience. Rather than describing the executive management structure as male-dominated, for example, respondents generally characterize it more specifically as White male-dominated. And just as the womyn in Berta’s article feel that they have yet to achieve parity with their male counterparts, interviewees in my study largely see their corporate realities in less than apposite terms from a compensation, status, institutional expectation, and group representation perspective. Like Berta’s womyn, nevertheless, they recount significant mentor and sponsor support from upper level men, in particular, and report fewer roadblocks to success than in years past. And although they pointedly note that White womyn are being promoted at much higher rates than Black, they recognize that there has been progress and generally view the increased ascendance of Blacks as an opportunity to mentor more authentically and continually infiltrate the executive ranks.

Although they acknowledge that previous research suggests that formal mentorship while useful is not as effective as informal mentorship, Allen et al (2006) note that formal mentoring programs steadily gain organizational popularity despite insubstantial empirical data about how such initiatives should be structured to obtain optimal results. Consequently, they analyze perceived design aspects of formal mentoring programs and the outcomes of career and psychosocial mentoring, mentorship quality, and role modeling for mentors and mentees alike. Allen et al find, in general, that a sense of contributing to the mentoring process (via participation in the matching process,
involvement in establishing meeting guidelines, and inclusion in setting goals and objectives) and training viewed as high in quality are consistently associated with the aforementioned outcome variables. Notably, however, the mere receipt of training does not enhance mentor or protégé reports of mentoring behavior or mentorship quality. It is the perception of high quality that renders the time effective and well spent.

Allen et al’s (2006) work helps bridge the gap between research and practice by encouraging the architects of today’s formal mentoring programs to emphasize bidirectional perceived input to the mentoring process while providing high quality training for all involved. While other factors may be important to the development of effective mentoring relationships, Allen et al submit that these two are most critical. This idea may work well in the current context. For involving aspirant Black managers in choosing mentors and setting mentoring goals, objectives, and meeting guidelines while providing high quality preparation for the interaction seems like a recipe for mutual understanding plus individual and organizational satisfaction and success.

Ortiz-Walters (2009) explores the effect of mentorship collaborations on mentee work performance early and later in their careers via a longitudinal study of archival academic population data. Sxe determines that mentors with higher job performance levels prior to the relationships undertook more collaborative projects with mentees, and their mentees enjoyed higher job performance. Ortiz-Walters notes that mentorship collaborations somewhat moderated the relationship between mentor previous work performance and mentee later job performance. Femyle mentees as well as femyle mentors participated in more collaborations than did male mentees and male mentors, correspondingly. However, the mediating impacts of gender similitude on the relationship between mentorship
collaborations and work performance privileged male—but not femyle—mentees in same-sex mentorships. Ortiz-Walters suggests, overall, that mentorship collaborations play a key process role in supporting mentee job performance, with gender factors affecting both the quantity of collaboration encountered and the resultant benefits.

Although Ortiz-Walters’ (2009) study is based on an academic population, its message that mentee’s choice of mentor can meaningfully impact their professional careers suggests that Black aspirants should use previous job performance as a criterion for selecting mentors in addition to such considerations as interpersonal comfort and leadership style. Indeed, her results indicate that companies may provide valuable aid to novices by offering training on what qualities to seek in a mentor. Ortiz-Walters argues not only that mentorship collaboration is a significant process mechanism through which mentors can help mentees obtain tangible benefits but also that mentorship collaborations may improve organizational performance. Thus, firms may gain from strategically pairing mentors and mentees and training both parties on how to effectively collaborate.

Simon et al (2008) investigate the mentoring experiences of Black womyn social work education leaders as mentees. Their pilot study uses a survey methodology to examine how these womyn characterize their present mentoring behavior toward protégés. Simon et al aim primarily to offer insight on four topics: (1) the regularity with which respondents obtained career and psychosocial mentoring, (2) the variance in mentoring behavior received given mentor gender or race, (3) the effectiveness of Thomas’ (1998) cross-racial mentoring paradigm, which posits that the dyads in question are more likely to encompass both psychosocial and career guidance when the parties
share philosophies on dealing with racial issues, and (4) the respondents’ mentoring
counter as faculty members.

Simon et al’s (2008) findings reveal that the level of psychosocial and career
mentoring Black females offer is greater than what they were afforded as doctoral
students or as academy members. Additionally, respondents received the least assistance
from their own mentors with work-life balance issues and presently provide little support
in this area to their own mentees. Just as the nature of access, compatibility, same- and
cross-gender issues, sexism, and organizational culture all impact the state of womyn and
mentoring, Simon et al argue, race/ethnicity and culture further complicate workplace
mentoring realities. Indeed, they report, much of the extant literature suggests that race
plays a significant role in the establishment of mentoring relationships as these
associations generally form along same-race lines. Simon et al conclude that it is
especially important to understand the dynamics of cross-racial mentoring in the academy
since same-race mentoring matches are frequently not available for people of color.

While Simon et al’s (2008) work is based on social work education, its emphasis on
Black femly leaders suggests that HSBHTP femly, if not males, may provide a higher
quality of mentoring to mentees than they themselves received in the past. And though
work-life balance concerns have not been a major mentoring focus, the implication is that
this is an area that professionals, broadly, should emphasize. Finally, although race can
be key in the formation of mentoring relationships, the under-representation of Black
execs in hospitality suggests that enhancing the compatibility of cross-racial mentoring
pairings by matching those with similar philosophies for addressing race, for example, is
an effective way of avoiding interpersonal tension and improving mentoring outcomes.
Thomas (1993) interrogates how individual strategies for navigating race influence the rapport that develops between cross-race (Black and White) pairs of junior and senior personnel in the workplace. His central concern is whether seniors function merely as sponsors for mentees, offering advocacy for promotions, feedback, coaching, and the like or whether these individuals become true mentors, providing psychosocial guidance and friendship along with valuable career support for protégés. Thomas’ qualitative inquiry concludes that the parties' preferred method of coping with racial difference—either refuting and repressing it or confronting it openly—and whether both participants favored the same approach affected the type of relationship that developed. Only when both preferred the same methods did more effective mentor-mentee relationships arise.

While this study implies there is no single best way to handle racial diversity in mentoring relationships, Thomas (1993) indicates that the method selected always matches the senior individual’s preference, despite the gender and race of the mentor or sponsor and the mentee. This suggests that cross-race developmental interactions are rooted in and shaped by the culture of hierarchal, organizational group dynamics.

The clear application to the proliferation of formal and informal mentoring between majority hospitality mentors and Black aspirants is that matching individuals with similar philosophies for dealing with racial diversity is critical. A potential problem is that there may be a shortage of senior managers who prefer to openly discuss issues of racial difference with potential mentees. This suggests, moreover, that there is value in diversity and sensitivity training and other strategies designed to authentically share information about difference and get employees on the same page. As well, the increasing number of HSBHTPs may result in a larger pool of likeminded mentors for Black neophytes.
Oglesky’s (2008) examination illustrates that mentorship loyalty is a dithering source of anxiety in these dyads. Feedback from in-depth interviews reveals that mentoring relationships that are grounded in a shielding, dedicated, caring part of loyalty can also induce conformity, quell dissent, and stifle professional development. Oglesky believes the ambivalence incited by loyalty matters is evident in the practicalities of ordinary interaction. Concern about what the parties do for each other, what they are prepared to relinquish or forgo, and what each ultimately expects in return generates tension among strategic, emotional, and normative motivations. As well, Oglesky submits, customary manifestations of loyalty—concerning material and emotional labor—epitomize the asymmetry of the mentor–mentee power connection.

Oglesky’s (2008) findings gainsay research that characterizes mentorships as gift-relationships. Notwithstanding the ostensibly voluntary nature of the contact, Oglesky contends that although participants seldom establish detailed arrangements regarding the exchange conditions, there is generally a presumption of quid pro quo and a sense that mentorship involvement presages the intensification and imposition of expectations and compulsions. Thus, Oglesky suggests that researchers recast mentorship as a complex association replete with challenges even as it brims with wonderful opportunities.

Oglesky (2008) calls for a classic conceptualization of mentorship as an intimate interpersonal bond with ordinary ups and downs to supplant the benefits-dysfunctions argument among mentoring scholars, even as sxe deems it essential to highlight circumstances under which excessively positive or negative outcomes can result. Sxe maintains that an understanding of the inexorable pressures of mentorship loyalty can help participants manage the process better. Oglesky argues, moreover, that
acknowledging the limits of mentoring roles and dealing with extant conflicts can bolster interpersonal relationships just as abandoning quixotic expectations that mentorship participants will go to the ends of the earth for each other is crucial to maintaining a helpful perspective in such emotionally exigent contexts.

The lesson for Black aspirants in contemporary hospitality mentorship, then, is that initiating relationships with a comprehensive awareness of the inevitable emotional complexity is simultaneously freeing and beneficial as it sets the stage for more honest and effortless exchange. Expressly delineating expectations at the outset, moreover, may help the parties establish agreeable parameters, anticipate a range of emotive potentialities, and engage in mutually appropriate and productive interactions.

Nguyen et al (2007) assess the applicability of the European American mentoring-career satisfaction relationship to Asian/Pacific Islander American (APIA) faculty and investigate acculturation—the process of adapting to one’s cultural context—as a potential moderator via self-report surveys at four large California public universities. They determine that the relationship is applicable to APIA faculty and that acculturation contributes to the paradigm. Although acculturation does not temper the mentoring-career satisfaction association, Nguyen et al find that it predicted mentorship (via an interaction) and vocational satisfaction (for respondents born abroad) individually. Mentees using specific acculturation techniques (especially integration, characterized by high American and high API orientations) received more support from mentors with particular ethnic backgrounds. As well, respondents who were born abroad and are more steeped in their API culture experienced enhanced career satisfaction. Nguyen et al conclude that scholars
should seriously consider cultural factors, like acculturation, when researching or working with APIAs.

Researchers and respondents alike have expressed that there are significant cultural distinctions between underrepresented Black managers and modern corporate America’s predominantly White power elite. Indeed, acculturation surfaces repeatedly as a critical factor in the potential success of Black aspirants. While it is not immediately appropriate to draw connections between foreign-born APIAs and Black hospitality managers born largely in the U.S., understanding and exploiting the intensity with which African-Americans are connected with their culture and are accustomed to the prevailing norms may be helpful in improving intercultural workplace interaction and maximizing the group’s career satisfaction. Combining same-race mentoring with cross-race mentoring, for example, is a powerful way of building on strong cultural ties while broadening horizons and creating more expansive connections.

Lentz and Allen (2009) examine the connections among mentoring others, notions of career plateauing, and work attitudes. This survey of southeastern U.S. government employees indicates that mentoring others is related to more positive job feelings, while enhanced job content and hierarchal plateauing are linked with less positive attitudes. Lentz and Allen establish, specifically, that mentor experience and psychosocial guidance moderate the undesirable outcomes connected with job content plateauing perceptions but not hierarchal plateauing. With apposite caveats regarding causal direction, the authors suggest, moreover, that the process of mentoring and supporting mentees may assuage the unfavorable effects of job content plateauing and improve mentor work attitudes.
Lentz and Allen’s (2009) investigation of mentor perspectives suggests that mentoring others can be a favorable experience for mentors even though the addition of this job task can have negative effects. Additionally, increased levels of mentor experience and psychosocial guidance as opposed to the strict dispensation of career strategy can mitigate potentially negative outcomes regarding job content plateauing and elevate mentor job attitudes. So, emphasizing the positive aspects of mentoring can be an effective means of engaging talented organizational leaders and developing more Black executives. As well, increased mentorship can help avoid job content plateauing and add satisfaction to mentors’ daily experiences.

Via an investigation of tourism operator needs in rural England, Wiltshier (2007) identifies the potential resource support that mentors offer mentees in informal settings. Wiltshier’s examination of small business operator, tourism planner, and non-profit organization requirements results in the identification and prioritization of several critical factors necessary to revitalize communities and exposes the competency and skills gaps stakeholders must address to effectively implement tourism development. Since Wiltshier believes mentors can offer crucially important expertise and impart fructifying qualities to stakeholders, he analyzes mentors’ roles in rural tourism communities in hopes of identifying characteristics that can be emulated elsewhere.

The main mentoring characteristics that Wiltshier (2007) establishes include unconventional learning methods and rendering the hidden networks and partnerships ascribed to rural mentors more structured and visible. He notes also that mentors report great enjoyment in forming positive and productive relationships with mentees and that successful mentors see their mentoring involvement as a lifestyle choice. Wiltshire
argues, ultimately, that a great deal of vocational specific learning occurs informally and that more effectively tapping the persons and passions involved is a relatively low cost enterprise with potentially immeasurable benefits.

Wiltshier’s (2007) findings suggest that a better understanding of the mentoring information that is often informally exchanged may be useful in improving best practices and optimizing organizational outcomes. And, insofar as Blacks in the present inquiry have greatly benefited from informal mentorship and continually achieved, unpacking and broadly instituting what has worked most effectively may help expand this success. Finally, uncovering and more clearly defining the obscured relationships and structures that have benefited today’s leaders may similarly position newcomers for success.

Using the examples of three biracial, Black-identifying womyn from clinical practice, Walker (2008) illustrates how racial apprehension inhibits the development of authenticity, empowerment, and mutuality in mentoring and other intimate relationships. Positing that nervousness regarding difference is inevitably a source of great distress in a society that stratifies humyn differences like race, Walker contends that such anxieties can frustrate our most sincere attempts to create and maintain high-quality connections. Sxe adds that tensions, which might otherwise broaden and deepen associative bonds, become inflexible and immobilizing in the angst-ridden madness of a racially stratified culture. Walker aims, primarily, to examine the negative effects of racial unease and highlight relational strategies that promote fortitude, healing, and mutual empowerment.

Walker (2008) concludes the road to relational healing involves acknowledging that individuals on both sides of societal inequality are conditioned to embrace disconnection strategies as survival skills. Sxe argues, moreover, that refusing to admit this simply
reinforces the power of socialization as an agent of disconnection. Similar to Oglensky’s
(2008) *ups and downs* conceptualization of mentoring relationships, Walker characterizes
the realization of relational healing as a process laden with risk but imbued with
potential. Sxe refers to this process as a *journey of courage and faith* filled with great
opportunities to discover and enrich our capacity for authentic engagement. Ultimately,
Walker submits, the attainment of relational healing leads us to face conflict with belief
in our humyn possibilities and hope for the emergence of something wonderful and new.

A clear implication for hospitality mentors and mentees is that a bidirectional
awareness of extant sociocultural inequities can facilitate genuine understanding in cross-
racial interactions and generate mentorships that advance everyone’s interests. Rather
than being deterred by inexorable racial tension, then, individuals should enter into
conflict with confidence in the capacity of authentic and healthy connections to convey
useful knowledge and produce mutually beneficial personal and professional outcomes.

Kay and Wallace (2007) investigate the process, conditions, and beneficiaries of
mentorship gains in a study of practicing lawyers. They begin with an empirical
assessment of such extrinsic and intrinsic rewards as career progression, earnings, job
satisfaction, procedural justice, and value of work. Kay and Wallace’s analysis considers
how organizational factors, as well as mentor and mentee characteristics and relationship
quality, influence mentoring outcomes. The study utilizes a longitudinal panel survey and
a social capital view to gauge the relative effects of mentoring actions and networks.

Kay and Wallace (2007) conclude that the fruits of dynamic mentoring relationships
are especially important to intrinsic job rewards. Indeed, the communication and role-
modeling components of mentorship educe social capital, promoting lawyering as an
excellent, honest, and socially beneficial profession. Kay and Wallace also find that mentoring enhances job satisfaction through the skills, accomplishments and recognition developed by coaching protégés, providing challenging assignments, and championing mentees’ reputations and qualities to other organizational powerbrokers. And, they note, lawyers with multiple mentors—at once or throughout their careers—experience substantially greater career progression, earnings, job satisfaction, procedural justice, and social value of work.

Kay and Wallace (2007) delineate a host of other key findings. Although they were surprised to learn that femyles are more likely than males to be mentored, for example, the authors determine that males are no more likely to be mentored by persons of higher status, even though this mentorship generates superior returns to males. And, while femyle participants were predominantly mentored by men, Kay and Wallace note that femyles were still more likely than males to be mentored by womyn. Womyn also recounted more psychosocial mentoring than their male complements. And because psychosocial mentoring activities are especially helpful to lawyers’ job satisfaction, femyles with multiple mentors gain through increased job satisfaction. However, large and significant gender disparities in earnings and feelings of procedural justice become non-significant when separately considering lawyers with mentors. As well, the gender advantage of males over femyles in job satisfaction is inverted in this scenario.

So, although career mentoring functions are essential to successful integration into law, psychosocial mentoring assumes an important role over the longer term. While having a male mentor and engaging primarily in career mentoring activities enhances procedural justice, Kay and Wallace submit that it does not appreciably impact other
career outcomes. And though they establish that mentor intimacy is not linked with career rewards, Kay and Wallace find that hierarchal relationships, or having well placed mentors with great authority and powerful resources, yields a male income advantage.

Kay and Wallace’s (2007) exploration of the intersection of sex, social capital, and tutelage in law provides useful lessons for contemporary hospitality mentorship. The most central is that gender disparities in pay and perception of procedural justice as well as job satisfaction are mitigated by effective career function and psychosocial mentoring. And the benefit of having multiple mentors is that aspirants are more likely to experience superior career rewards. Furthermore, the recognition that certain aspects of mentorship can produce social capital and foster a positive perspective of one’s profession may be useful in raising the specter of hospitality broadly and attracting more high quality talent. Finally, a critical implication is that gender mentoring disparities require more scrutiny in order to attain enduring corporate equity. I suspect the same can be said for racial mentoring outcomes and submit that it is one thing to provide mentoring and quite another to ensure that this crucial guidance achieves its intended effect.

Mysyk (2008) uses the career narratives of 13 femyle professionals to construct a mentor identity formation model. Sxe depicts an emergent and evolving milieu in which the mentoring role and mentor identity are fashioned from the processes and knowledge obtained via the execution of individual home, work, and community roles. The wisdom study participants have accrued enhances self-awareness via a deeper understanding of their multiple selves and the ways in which change, difficulty, support, and, most significantly, relationships have molded their career paths and shaped their life journeys.
Mysyk (2008) characterizes the formation of apposite and enduring mentorships as an intricate process of clarifying attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, roles, and values. Developing workable identities for these new responsibilities, sxe argues, obliges mentees and mentors to familiarize themselves with goals and expectations as well as each other. Mysyk posits that mentors craft organizational, career, and mentoring identities in industry and incorporate multiple personas in the production of their life stories. Sxe idealizes holistic mentors—those technocrats who not only have attained sufficient knowledge for their own ascension and for the rigors of mentoring but who care enough about mentee progression that the decision to mentor is virtually inevitable.

Mysyk (2008) feels that mentorship garners attention because it generates many great outcomes for diverse stakeholders. Her residual concern is whether better understanding of mentor identity formation can substantially improve mentorship satisfaction and create increased value for mentees, mentors, individual organizations, and entire professions.

According to Mysyk (2008), then, the best mentors are products of the myriad complexities and deep richness of varied identities. The hope for budding Black hospitality professionals is that they encounter holistic and engaged mentors who are as eager to share knowledge and experiences as they are excited about helping mentees grow and advance. And the good news for committed mentors and companies as well as our entire industry is that this is the kind of assistance that eventually advantages us all.

Colorism

While colorism is a concept that I regularly queried, given my suspicions that it is deeply connected with the workplace treatment of Blacks, it generated a considerable amount of feedback that never seemed to coalesce around a specific theory. The volume
and intensity of respondent commentary as well as the particularized gender differences are articulated in the individual narratives and subsequent discussions above. More meaning, I suspect, will be made of these differences/distinctions in future studies.

Despite the pervading conceptualization of colorism, I am mostly concerned about its broader relevance to racism and the differential impact and treatment of Blacks in the hospitality workplace. One consideration in this regard is the pointed awareness and emphasis of colorism in the Black community juxtaposed with Whites’ marginal recognition of the issue. For, although study respondents consider the matter of little relevance to Whites, I am not convinced. Rather, it seems that colorism and pigmentism are intricately interwoven into the fabric of Black disadvantage and White privilege.

Even as many are convinced that varying hues of Blackness are unimportant in the particularized challenges of the modern workplace, it seems to me and others that complexion is expressly linked with the quality of treatment. If it is true that racial discrimination persists, it certainly makes sense that the lighter one is the better he or sxe is likely to be treated. But this does not mesh with the majority of the findings.

**Colorism Defined**

Several scholars present definitions for colorism. Although a few offer expressly intraracial descriptions (Barnett, 2004; Cunningham, 1997; Thompson & Keith, 2001) most frame skin tone prejudice more broadly or in specifically interracial and intraracial terms (Bodenhorn, 2006; Gullickson, 2003; Herring, 2002; Hill, 2002; Hochschild & Weaver, 2007; Nancef, 2005). And while Hill (2000) analyzes an all Black male sample, a few researchers highlight the especially negative implications of colorism for dark-skinned Black womyn (Barnett, 2004; Hill, 2002; Thompson & Keith, 2001), and the
remainder discuss skin color bias more generally. Finally, although Barnett (2004), Gullickson (2003), and Nancef (2005) reference colorism strictly in terms of complexion, others explain the import of additional phenotypic characteristics in establishing social status (Bodenhorn, 2006; Cunningham, 1997; Herring, 2002; Hill, 2002; Hochschild & Weaver, 2007; Thompson & Keith, 2001).

Several researchers emphasize the sociohistoric context of colorism. According to Gullickson (2003), for example, America’s racist past has rendered Whiteness an ideal within Black and White communities and generated stratification among Blacks based on proximity to this standard. While noting that Blacks with Eurocentric features have been admired above those with darker complexions for centuries, Herring (2002) describes colorism as a vicious legacy of American slavery that reflects an importunate Eurocentric bias. He maintains that lighter-skinned Blacks are the result of varied miscegenation since the colonial era but posits that colorism has largely been obfuscated by broader racial issues since skin tone prejudice, like race, is historically contingent and rooted in supremacist assumptions. Hill (2002) also blames historic racial oppression and slavery for skin color bias. He says slaveholding interests propagated a supremacist ideology which deemed people of African ancestry inherently inferior. As well, Hill submits that Whiteness became associated with all that is beautiful, civilized, and virtuous, while Blackness became synonymous with all that is unattractive, uncouth, and wanton and phenotype became the preeminent marker of social status and moral disposition.

Several scholars make the point, moreover, that colorism is not a simple function of complexion bias. Rather, its basis for discrimination encompasses a range of physical features like eye color, hair texture, lip prominence, and nose shape in addition to skin
color (Herring, 2002; Hill, 2000; Hill, 2002; Hochschild & Weaver, 2007; Thompson & Keith, 2001). While blue, green, and otherwise light-colored eyes; relatively thin lips and noses; and straight or good hair; have been favored historically, these authors note that broad noses; full or thick lips; and kinky, nappy, or similarly bad hair have long been objects of social ridicule and scorn.

Some of the simplest research definitions of colorism encountered are Bodenhorn’s (2006) “a preference for light complexions,” Gullickson’s (2003) “giving preferential treatment to those who have lighter skin tone,” and Hill’s (2000) “color bias.” Hill (2000) alternately defines colorism as the societal stigmatization of dark skin and other physical features linked with African ancestry. Nancef (2005) describes colorism as the propensity to feel or act negatively towards members of racial groups because of the darkness or lightness of their skin. And Herring (2002) defines colorism as the bigoted treatment of persons in a particular racial group because of their skin color.

Since colorism is commonly interrogated within the context of the Black community, several intraracially-specific definitions appear in the literature. Thompson and Keith (2001), for instance, view colorism as intraracial skin color bias that persistently divides and shapes Black people’s life experiences. Color prejudice within the Black community, Thompson and Keith continue, entails preference and desire for light skin and other attendant features. Hill states that colorism is a type of intraracial bigotry based on complexion (2000) and asserts, furthermore, that it is an internalized variation of conventional American bias against dark skin tones and African physical attributes (2002). Because Herring (2002) believes colorism functions both intraracially and interracially, he identifies intraracial colorism as members of a particular race making
complexion-based distinctions between members of their own racial group and characterizes interracial colorism as members of one race making skin tone-based distinctions between members of a different race.

**Colorism vs. Racism**

Barnett (2004) and Hochschild and Weaver (2007) clearly distinguish the terms *colorism* and *racism*. According to Barnett, colorism establishes the lighter shades of Blackness as superior and consequently subordinates the darker shades while racism is the discrimination Whites inflict on non-Whites because White is the predominant culture. The association between colorism and racism, per Barnett, is that colorism is internal bias that is connected to and impacted by the external reality of White racism. Barnett argues, moreover, that regardless of skin tone, Blacks would not discriminate against each other if the domineering and outer force of White racism did not exist.

Hochschild and Weaver (2007) deem colorism a cousin of racial bias and insist that it, too, is concerned largely with obtaining and maintaining power over others. Hochschild and Weaver stress that color discrimination differs from racism by making distinctions within a single racial group rather than between groups. The authors explain that light-skinned and occasionally dark-skinned persons ascribe higher status and confer more authority and wealth to one group, generally those specified as White, and presume that that is the appropriate thing to do. Then for similar reasons, Hochschild and Weaver maintain, individuals assign higher status and accord more power and resources to persons of one complexion, usually light skin, within the groups identified as non-White.

While Hochschild and Weaver (2007) emphasize that colorism, like racism, has pejorative implications, they also note that colorism can be conceptualized in either
unidirectional or multidirectional terms. So, colorism, like racism, may refer only to people with sufficient power and status to exercise it, or persons of any particular skin tone can disparage or oppress individuals of another. Hochschild and Weaver contend that although colorism can operate within or between racial and ethnic groups, multidirectional manifestations are far less frequent.

Utilizing information from the National Survey of Black Americans, Hill (2002) establishes and evaluates a gendered colorism model. This data, which was gathered by Black interrogators and encompasses respondent skin color particulars and interviewers' subjective appraisals of participants’ physical attractiveness, permit a solid examination of how skin tone consciously or unconsciously affects attractiveness perceptions among Black adults. While Hill (2002) determines, as hypothesized, that complexion impacts the attractiveness scores allocated to Black femyles in a persuasive and monotonic fashion, the correlation is considerably weaker for males. The gender-by-skin-tone association is in line with the presupposition that Blacks view light skin tone as fairly feminine just as it is in harmony with Hill’s findings that Eurocentric beauty standards permeate the Black community. For, although Hill notes other researchers have suggested that males maintain the fiercest color biases regarding feminine beauty ideals, he concludes that complexion preference does not vary with the perceiver's gender as womyn were no less likely to articulate color-based judgments about either femyle or male participants.

While Hill’s (2002) gendered colorism model analysis focuses squarely on Blacks’ perceptions of complexion, its finding that European standards of beauty, especially for femyles, are pervasive among Blacks raises concerns about whether this notion impacts such disparities as professional rank and salary that emerge in the current study. And
although several study participants indicate that color bias may be a problem in modern hospitality organizations, the real issue is whether and how this manifests in everyday workplace interactions and in managerial evaluation and promotion determinations.

Prior to Hill (2002), Thompson and Keith (2001) employ National Survey of Black Americans data in an investigation of how gender socially constructs the significance of skin color in valuations of self-competence and self-worth. While Thompson and Keith find that complexion negatively impacts both self-efficacy and self-esteem, they indicate that it functions in differing domains of male and femyle identity. They argue, firstly, that skin tone predicts self-esteem for Black femyles but not Black males and, secondly, that skin color is a key predictor of self-efficacy for Black men as opposed to Black womyn. This behavior corresponds with conventional gendered attitudes about femininity and masculinity, according to Thompson and Keith. Moreover, they submit, there are circumstances that allow femyles to elude the consequences of colorism. The effect of complexion on self-esteem, for example, was far less intense for womyn with middle and upper class backgrounds. In fact, those with inferior self-esteem ratings in Thompson and Keith’s study were dark-skinned, working class womyn and dark-skinned femyles who were categorized as unattractive.

While attractiveness is the main complexion issue for femyles, Thompson and Keith (2001) state that stereotypes linked with perceptions of competence, criminality, and dangerousness are related to dark skin color for males. And though educational attainment is a means by which males might surmount skin tone bias, they note that modifications to physical features are tough to accomplish. Thompson and Keith also cite
research that womyn and low status individuals tend to feel fatalistic and respond more intensely to complexion discrimination because they do not feel personally empowered.

The blurring of gendered perspectives in the current study may be due to respondents’ relatively high socioeconomic status. And the superior levels of education, employment, and income may mediate the perceptual impact of skin color on self-efficacy and self-esteem for Black womyn and men alike. It is important to note, however, that the relative absence of dark-skinned femyle managers in the intensively appearance-based hospitality industry may be consistent with Thompson and Keith’s (2001) conceptualization of attractiveness as a major concern for femyles. Since the authors describe self-efficacy mainly as the result of an individual’s proficiency in assuming and overcoming challenges, it follows that persons in the present analysis would achieve high marks given their extraordinary track records. Likewise, perceptions of self-esteem are understandably high given respondents’ strong leadership ability, high organizational status, and overwhelmingly positive associations with colleagues and superiors.

Nancef (2005) examines the status of colorism on the 40th anniversary of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 via a review of color discrimination cases. While Title VII bars employment discrimination based on sex, race, national origin, religion, and color, Nancef protests that color and race are not legislatively defined and the EEOC, the agency responsible for oversight, has not expressly delineated color in its guiding principles or regulations. Nancef cites research that characterizes colorism and its harmful economic and personal consequences as ongoing national problems. Sxe explains, moreover, that this issue is not confined to any specific population but exists within all ethnicities and particularly within groups towards persons of the same group.
Given the domestic and international prevalence of colorism, sxe argues that courts must not to confuse national origin concerns with color discrimination issues. When evaluating plaintiff claims, Nancef insists the key question is not what the source of employer bias is but whether unfavorable employment decisions were unlawfully based on skin tone.

Nancef (2005) believes the courts possess the flexibility to recognize that skin color bias, which is commonly linked with racial perception, is a distinct issue that covers both interracial and intraracial bigotry. Sxe feels the recent eminence of color cases, the surge in filings, and the EEOC’s increasing interest, all suggest that colorism claims will continue to rise. Nancef remarks, however, that whether courts are indisposed to acknowledge Blacks’ claims is hard to establish given recent instances where Blacks have alternately filed claims of light and dark skin discrimination with mixed results. Moreover, sxe maintains, most colorism cases have been filed by South-Asians. And, in all but one case, Nancef indicates the courts have recognized the presence of color as a protected classification. While sxe asserts that this new acceptance generates confusion regarding race and color or national origin and color, Nancef hopes that with increased adjudication, colorism rulings will become more reflective of the statute’s original intent.

Since Nancef’s (2005) research plainly depicts colorism as an enduring interracial and intraracial problem, the negative economic and personal outcomes sxe cites potentially threaten Black hospitality managers when dealing with White coworkers and superiors and when engaging fellow Blacks. Although Black employees have filed skin color claims in the past, Nancef suggests that most have focused on discriminatory treatment by Black superiors since White-on-Black workplace bias typically results in claims of racism as opposed to colorism. While no respondents in the current study share
specific intraracial colorism challenges, most agree that such problems exist although they clearly distinguish these from widely persistent White racism. And though national origin discrimination did not surface as an interviewee concern, it is surely an issue with which industry leaders should be familiar. For no matter what an individual’s complexion or from which country they hail, it is essential, intelligent, and right to treat her or him equitably and fairly. Given predictions that color-based discrimination cases will increase, vigilant awareness seems a prudent safeguard against corporate wrongdoing.

Barnett (2004) reviews a series of colorism studies and concludes that light-skinned Blacks are socioeconomically advantaged relative to dark-skinned Blacks. Blurring the distinctions between color and race, he argues, furthermore, that dark-skinned femyles bear the brunt of societal racism. Barnett asserts that while the social significance of skin tone has been enormous for Black womyn generally, dark-skinned Black femyles, in particular, have received lower wages, less education, and more racial insults from police and other society members. The discrimination has been so severe, he contends, that many of these womyn have strategically sought to marry lighter skinned men in hopes of having lighter and more socially advantaged children. Though he states that dark-skinned Black womyn are most challenged by colorism, Barnett submits that while skin tone bias is problematic for Black men socially, the resentment that dark-skinned males often held toward lighter men was focused mainly in the employment arena where dark-skinned men tended to hold lower job positions.

While Barnett (2004) employs an exclusively intraracial conceptualization of colorism, his charges that lighter skinned Blacks are privileged socially and economically relative to dark-skinned Blacks and that dark-skinned Black womyn fare worst of all
deserve attention. This knowledge should compel employers to ensure that higher level posts are not held predominantly by lighter skinned Blacks and vice versa. The goal, as always, must be to impartially engage all applicants and aspirants. And when and where deficiencies exist in the pool of prepared individuals, individuals and organizations should commit to developing more diverse cadres of professionals.

A preliminary analysis of contemporary Black hospitality managers via the current study suggests that Barnett’s (2004) concerns regarding dark-skinned Black femyles are warranted since light-skinned femyles are overwhelmingly represented. Alternatively, the notion that dark-skinned males tend to hold lower occupational ranks does not hold as male study participants are disproportionately dark-skinned. While institutions ought always to recruit, develop, and promote top talent, this must not preclude organizational and personal commitments to holistic and representative diversity and inclusion.

After acknowledging previous studies that lighter skinned Blacks continue to be advantaged relative to darker skinned Blacks, Gullickson (2003) employs a threshold cohort model in a reanalysis of the National Survey of Black Americans to establish whether there has been variation across cohorts in the impact of skin color on academic, industrial, and spousal outcomes. Gullickson concludes that when differences across cohorts are considered, some of the preceding findings are completely invalidated. He submits, for example, that there has been a huge decrease in the influence of complexion on educational attainment starting with groups born in the mid-1940s. This reduction was so dramatic, Gullickson explains, that skin color appears to be a non-issue for cohorts born in the early 1960s. And, although similar but statistically weaker results emerged for occupational outcomes, Gullickson insists there has been no change regarding the
significance of complexion in conjugal matters, where it continues to provide access to partners with superior education and higher-status careers.

Like Nancef (2005), Gullickson (2003) is adamant that colorism and racism not be confounded. While Gullickson’s findings suggest that colorism among Blacks has waned, he concedes that this drop may be part of a broader decline in racism against Blacks but notes that this is not automatically implied by the data. Gullickson posits that the divergence or convergence of colorism and racism is critical because it signifies a strengthening or weakening of the color line. He explains that a deterioration of colorism among Blacks with no slump in racism across ethnicities indicates an intensification of the color line. Alternatively, Gullickson argues, a decrease in both processes reflects underlying weakness in the larger color line.

Gullickson (2003) also points out that reduced skin color effects do not necessarily mean that complexion bias has abated but rather that the ability to translate this bigotry into benefit may have diminished. Before the civil rights era, he explains, Blacks typically attended all-Black schools and middle class Blacks were mainly a petty bourgeoisie serving the Black community. After the turbulent 1950s and 1960s, however, schools integrated and Black middle class ranks expanded principally via incorporation into White companies and governmental institutions. Marriage, conversely, remained an overwhelmingly intraracial affair. Gullickson submits that these outcomes may be the result of Black and White integration in specific spheres of American life. He suggests that colorism may have been a by product of racism among Blacks that was never fully recognized by the White population. Finally, the incorporation of Blacks into formerly all-White organizations may have altered Blacks’ opportunity structure by establishing
different gatekeepers. So, while color may have been an ongoing concern for these new 
White gatekeepers, they may have been oblivious to more particular skin tone issues.

Gullickson’s (2003) determination that the impact of colorism on educational 
attainment has dramatically decreased suggests that there should be no significant 
differences between the academic achievement of light- and dark-skinned participants in 
the current study. Another potential implication of his threshold cohort model is that 
intraracial colorism for Blacks, at least in terms of educational and vocational 
achievement, will ultimately become a non-issue. Though Gullickson’s marriage-related 
finding is interesting, it is beyond the scope of this study. It would be interesting, 
however, to see if skin tone patterns exist in the current sample and whether there are 
clear ties, for instance, between dark skin respondents marrying light skin spouses with 
particular educational and occupational credentials.

Gullickson’s (2003) discussion of the color line is fascinating. While it seems logical 
that an overarching color line is largely responsible for both racist and colorist behavior, 
Gullickson indicates that the two processes may be unrelated. Indeed, his theory that mid-
20th century racial integration may have replaced complexion-discriminating Black 
gatekeepers with skin tone oblivious Whites is compelling. In a society that privileges 
Whiteness and demonizes Blackness, however, it seems exceedingly commonsensical 
that the closer one is to the former the better one is treated and vice versa.

Echoing scholars like Nancef (2005), Hochschild and Weaver (2007) state that 
colorism occurs both within the Black community and beyond, and most Blacks 
recognize this. Hochschild and Weaver explain that dark-skinned Blacks generally are 
socioeconomically inferior, have more punitive criminal justice associations, face
diminished prestige, and are less likely than their lighter complements to hold elective office. Nevertheless, they contend, Blacks' discernment of discrimination, belief that their destinies are connected, and racial attachment rarely vary by complexion. Hochschild and Weaver refer to this discrepancy between treatment and political posture as the skin color paradox and use it as an aperture into the racial politic of the past half-century.

Utilizing national surveys, Hochschild and Weaver (2007) articulate the skin color paradox as Blacks' allegiance to racial identity superseding the potential political significance of skin tone bias. Because Blacks largely view the struggle against racial stratification as primary, the authors suggest, they either do not see or choose not to address the intraracial hierarchy of complexion. Thus, dark-skinned Blacks' common experience of impairment has no political outlet, and the skin color paradox manifests.

Without fully establishing how much attention the skin color paradox truly calls for, Hochschild and Weaver (2007) assert that policies intended to resolve racial hierarchy are not effective for complexion stratification among Blacks and may actually make things worse. The authors imagine that the association between colorism and racism ultimately will be uncovered when one or the other vanishes. Although Hochschild and Weaver maintain that there are abundant grounds for political organization around skin tone bias, they suspect the masses will continue to disregard a prospective politics of color because they believe a politics of race is sufficient.

Whites are oblivious to colorism in the same way that they are unaware of the persistence of racism. Although they apathetically operate in the miasma of racial discrimination and skin tone bias and enjoy privilege while ignoring or rationalizing the asymmetric and monotonic unfairness that darker skinned people face, they fancy
themselves kind-hearted and morally apposite. Blacks’ effortless recognition of colorism is analogous to their hyperawareness of racial discrimination and results from their typically more negative experiences.

I disagree with Hochschild and Weaver’s (2007) assertion that racial stratification policies are unhelpful in dismantling colorism in the Black community. When and where public and private policy is fashioned around consistently treating everyone with humynism and guarding against valuing any social group or physical characteristic as categorically better, we move closer, first, to leveling the societal playing field and, second, to evaluating others solely on the content of their character and the fruit of their labor. Rather than approaching the problem from a racial perspective, however, I posit that a comprehensive politics of color is all that is needed to expunge the color line and simultaneously neutralize colorism and racism.

Utilizing information in the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, Herring (2002) studies propositions rooted in three racial stratification outcome models: (1) a binary, or Black-White, paradigm; (2) Bonilla-Silva’s (2004) tripartite archetype; and (3) a multi-ethnic theory of race and ethnicity. Herring establishes that Blacks and Whites experience substantially different realities across measures like earnings, education, family income, and occupational prestige, regardless of the model employed. And he finds that the Black-White race model remains useful in delineating baseline distinctions in who gets what while Bonilla-Silva’s tripartite paradigm, though compatible with the binary results, offers some improvements to that model.

Herring (2002) indicates, moreover, that some of the stratification outcomes are not entirely consistent with tripartite model expectations. He notes in particular that there are
instances where Bonilla Silva’s (2004) intermediary group of *honorary Whites* perform no better, and occasionally, do worse than the non-White, low level *collective Black* (e.g., earnings). So, although the tripartite race model advances the binary, Black-White perspective common in American society, it is not necessarily more accurate or more statistically powerful in predicting outcomes than social science’s multi-ethnic racial paradigm. Nevertheless, Herring is careful not to discount other reasons for choosing the tripartite over the more common multi-ethnic model (e.g., the multi-ethnic frame may lend itself more readily to cultural versus structural rationales for inequity or make it easier for *color-blind* ideology proponents to argue that race, as such, is not what counts). Herring concedes, finally, that the tripartite model may become particularly predictive of racial stratification outcomes in the future.

While the binary Black-White model of race is easily accessible and commonsensical, the increasing diversity of the modern business-scape suggests that more robust models may be helpful in addressing the complexities of contemporary social stratification. As Herring (2002) implies, however, any reasonable racial paradigm that change agents or researchers are likely to use will undoubtedly reveal significant and substandard outcomes for Blacks relative to Whites. Herring’s suggestion that the tripartite model essentially highlights structural inequality and disabuses people of the notion that a color-blind disposition is ideal increases the chances that I would choose it over other models.

Hill (2000) uses a longitudinal design linking a sample of southern-reared African-American males to their childhood census records (gathered in 1920) in an effort to replicate previous findings detailing the effect of skin tone on the socioeconomic status of African-Americans. Since the childhood census records Hill utilizes categorize African-
Americans expressly as Black or Mulatto, a unique examination of adult color stratification is possible. In agreement with previous research, Hill’s results underscore the significance of phenotypic characteristics in shaping African-Americans’ life chances. He finds specifically that individuals classified as Mulatto experienced modestly higher adult socioeconomic attainment relative to those identified as Black. While Hill notes that the Mulatto advantage moderates a bit after factoring in origin characteristics, multivariate results suggest that social origin differences account for just 10 to 20% of the complexion gap in adult achievement. The implication is that colorism as opposed to family background may be primarily responsible for skin tone differences in African-American male socioeconomic attainment.

According to Hill (2000), these findings suggest that colorism is the central cause of color-apparent stratification among African-Americans and are linked with the notion that African-Americans who approximate Eurocentric attractiveness standards are more competent than their darker complements. Hill asserts, however, that some of the unexplained differences in Black and Mulatto socioeconomic achievement may derive from unobserved childhood factors, like social network disparities.

Given the surge in biracial and multicultural population growth, Hill (2000) believes it is more important than ever to address the negative effects of colorism. And while he calls for more research to isolate the causes of the complexion divide in adult attainment, Hill supports greater efforts to help all Americans recognize skin color bias and counter the insidious perception that Whiteness is an indicator of beauty, intelligence, and merit.

While Hill’s (2000) work offers modest hope that family background improvements can yield gains in adult socioeconomic status, the greater implication is that innate skin
color differences play an extensive role. Hill’s recognition that social network variances may also factor significantly echoes the feedback of most participants in the current study. Respondents repeatedly cite the criticality of influential mentorships and sponsorships in obtaining the requisite connections and opportunities to demonstrate competence and excellence. And while several of the femyles and a few of the males can be characterized as Mulatto, it is not immediately clear that their outcomes are affected by complexion. In fact, a more plausible explanation is that effective social networks made the difference. To guard against creating a color-coded hierarchy in hospitality management, however, institutions should consider complexion diversity while fairly evaluating all candidates. For organizations should no more settle for an exclusively light-skinned management team than an all-White one. Indeed, attention must be paid.

Cunningham (1997) examines light-skinned Blacks’ racial identity formation. Since sxe defines light skin in terms of her study participants having been viewed as mixed, Latino, or White, and/or feeling insecure about their Blackness, the study focuses on light-skinned Blacks’ subjective experiences. Cunningham concludes that racial identity development in light-skinned Blacks is different from the processes that darker-skinned Blacks and Whites undergo, in part, because this population endures prejudice from the dominant culture plus rejection from the Black community. Cunningham reveals that each of her respondents embraced Black heritage and strongly identified with being Black. Sxe notes, however, that participants often struggled with notions of invisibility and the option of passing as White, especially at times when racist remarks were made. Ultimately, Cunningham’s three major findings involve (1) the profound impact that colorism has had on study participants, (2) the conceptualization of race for light-skinned
Blacks as a choice, which threatens self-image even as it implies freedom, and (3) the role of parents and communities in instilling a proud sense of kinship, historical knowledge, and resilience, which enables respondents to maintain and celebrate their Blackness and protect their sense of self despite the challenges faced from both cultures.

An interesting point regarding the current study is that respondents largely perceive skin tone as having had little to no influence on their success. Although interviewees universally express that racism has played a negative role, interracial and intraracial colorism per se are virtually unaddressed. And while some of the femyles, in particular, describe themselves as light-skinned, no participants recount experiences where they realistically had the option of passing for White. Conversely, there was near unanimous adulation for participants’ parents for inculcating a strong sense of the resilient and victorious Black self in the context of a predominantly White sociopolitical structure. A few respondents, however, share pushback from fellow Blacks or general concern about not being Black enough because of their accent or diction, their interest in nontraditional sports like golf or hockey, or their choice of neighborhood.

Limitations

This study has a number of limitations that may affect validity and generalizability. Because the focal point of the research is respondents’ compensation, for example, some individuals were reluctant to reveal this often confidential information. Although the information will continue to be confidential, some respondents were hesitant or expressed concern because participation was not anonymous. Also, it was practically impossible to verify respondents’ salaries. This is a concern since the starting point of this information-gathering, analytical, and theoretical exercise is that respondents are salaried individuals...
who earn at least $100,000 annually. Also, while U.S. Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics information suggest the potential research population is as large as 30,000 persons, it was quite difficult to identify accessible individuals and convince them to participate. The designation *Black hospitality and tourism professional* was also somewhat tricky to define since *hospitality and tourism* and *Black* are, arguably, nebulous terms. The key was to define these terms thoroughly and consistently enough to include all individuals who reasonably should be included while excluding persons who appear to meet many of the basic parameters but ought to not be included. Another limitation is that because this is a study of HSBHTPs, untold numbers of successful and highly compensated Black professionals and entrepreneurs who are self-employed or otherwise not compensated via a guaranteed annual salary were not studied.

A potential issue regarding hospitality and tourism industry earnings was that average wages are less than those in most other industries (United States Department of Labor, 2004). A search for *six figure income jobs by category* on Salary.com’s Web site, for example, returned no results for the following hospitality and tourism industry occupation categories: food, beverage, and tobacco jobs; hotel, gaming, leisure, and travel jobs; and restaurant and food services jobs. Although the vast majority of job categories across industries (47 out of 68) included job positions where the national median expected salary equals or exceeds $100,000, these three job categories fell in the 21 that did not. Across categories of food, beverage, and tobacco; hotel, gaming, leisure, and travel; and restaurant and food services, in other words, there are no typical positions for which the median expected salary for United States workers is expected to be $100,000 or more per year. The specific job titles included in the aforementioned occupation categories are as
follows: assistant restaurant manager, assistant room service manager, bakery and confectionery decorating worker, banquet manager, bartender, cafeteria attendant, catering manager, combined food preparation and service worker, concierge, convention and meeting manager, cook, cooking assistant, counter attendant, executive chef, executive steward, food preparation worker, food service assistant, gift shop manager, hostess/host pay scale, hotel attendant, hotel executive housekeeper, hotel front desk clerk, hotel front desk shift manager, hotel manager, hotel reservation clerk, lounge manager, pastry chef, reservations manager, restaurant manager, room service manager, sous chef, bread and pastry baker, cannery worker, institution or cafeteria cook, short order cook, univ./college food services manager, wine stewards/stewardesses, baggage porter, casino dealer/attendant, head of housekeeping, housekeeper, housekeeping supervisor, meeting/event planner, horse rider/exerciser, travel clerk, and travel coordinator.

Although several respondents and potential participants expressed that 90 minutes is a long time commitment for busy professionals, the magnitude of the time commitment was exacerbated by the fact that no honorarium was offered to persons who were asked to generously discuss deeply personal issues for the benefit of research. While it would have been better to provide a $100 American Express gift certificate, dinner for two at an upscale national restaurant chain, or some other token of appreciation, the reality is that there was no budget and participants were not compensated in any way for their time.

Another limitation was my preliminary dissertation completion schedule. Because I had been offered an excellent compensation package for an overseas Assistant Professorship that required me to defend my dissertation in advance, my initial goal was
to build on my first three chapters by completing all research interviews, writing up the results, and successfully defending in the course of a single summer. While this sounds absurd after having gone through the intensive 14-month process that has brought me to this point, the initial invitations only gave potential respondents a matter of weeks to respond. It is highly possible that busy schedules prompted some not to respond while others might not even have viewed invitations until after the publicized response date had passed. In retrospect, it would have been better to disseminate invitations without a deadline or with a three-month interview schedule.

Although this study captured a decent mix of HSBHTPs, it would have been enormously useful to have a better understanding of the size and scope of the larger research population prior to sampling. And it would have been preferable to speak with an equal number of respondents from each of the four established salary levels ($100,000 - $149,999; $150,000 - $199,999; $200,000 - $249,000; and $250,000 or more). Such a sampling distribution would likely have rendered the findings more powerful.

Just as it would have been better to have a more equal distribution of participants across income levels, it would have been preferable to have a more geographically diverse sample. Since the goal was to develop a model that captures the essence of the experience of HSBHTPs nationwide, it would have been great to interview an equal number of participants from the Northeastern, Midwestern, Southern, and Western U.S.

Another consideration is hospitality sector. While hotels were very well represented, having more respondents from areas like food and beverage, education, airlines, convention and visitors bureaus, and tourism-oriented fields would have been valuable.
A final limitation is the reality that the presented data, analysis, and interpretation are mine, and another scholar, likely, would have generated and interpreted things differently. Ultimately, however, I have been frank about my assumptions, literature review journey, and analytical stance so that unavoidable biases might be properly understood, and I would expect the work of all good researches to be complementary.

Future Research

This effort heralds the advent of an exciting new area of hospitality and tourism research as the substantial ground broken here uncovers a fresh stream of important and practical inquiry that can positively transform the industry by helping the powers that be and that could be work together to level the corporate playing field and maximally attract and optimize the profuse talents of wondrously multifaceted individuals from all walks and thoughts of life. A host of future research designs and questions spring to mind:

a) Various testing the four grounded theoretical propositions delineated on page 282 of this text

b) Using essentially the same design as this study but conducting separate inquiries featuring Asians, Latinos, and Whites and, perhaps, comparing them with Blacks

c) Re-interviewing current participants two, five, and 10 years out regardless of job status or salary

d) Using the same basic design but employing more stringent theoretical sampling with three males and three females in each of the four salary ranges ($100,000 - $149,999; $150,000 - $199,999; $200,000 - $249,999; and $250,000 and above)

e) Conducting a study with Blacks who earn $250,000 and above only, or limiting the study to those in the $250,000 - $499,999 salary range
f) Doing a study with Blacks salaried only at $500,000 and above, or limiting it to those in the $500,000 - $999,999 salary range

g) Exclusively interviewing Blacks salaried at $1,000,000 or more annually

h) (1) Having respondents complete preliminary surveys to save time and more appropriately focus questions, (2) conducting in-depth interviews, (3) asking participants to e-mail anything they wish to add a few days or a week after interviewing, and finally (4) conducting follow ups with interviewees based on the emergent information and analysis obtained from completing the earlier steps

i) Exclusively examining the experiences of Black mid-level managers

j) Conducting a study of Black NSMH juniors and seniors preparing to formally enter the hospitality and tourism workforce

k) Interviewing NSMH national board members of all races regarding their thoughts, experiences, and industry expectations in terms of ACRASH

l) Separately employing each of the aspects of ACRASH in studies focused on Asians, Blacks, Latinos, and Whites individually and/or individually exploring ACRASH issues comparatively

m) Conducting a study with Black high school seniors involved in hospitality/culinary programs regarding their thoughts, experiences, and industry expectations

n) Interviewing industry CEO’s of all races regarding their thoughts, perceptions, and experiences regarding the recruitment and retention of Black managers and juxtaposing this information with conversations with their vice president for human resources or similar
o) Doing a study of best practices and programs in acquiring, retaining, and developing quality Black talent

p) Conducting a study which examines the experience of Black hospitality and tourism assistant, associate, and full professors in the United States

q) Comparing the experiences of Black managers in historically Black and predominantly White hospitality and tourism organizations

r) Exploring generational differences among Black employees in the hospitality and tourism industry

s) Employing the implicit association test (IAT) or using some other visually-based mechanism to investigate feelings about complexion among Black and White industry managers and possibly others

Also, given the preeminence of awareness, discrimination, experience, relationships, and excellence in the AADERE model of success uncovered in this study, other works might explore the import of awareness and investigate whether discrimination, for example, continues to dominate. As well, whole studies could be organized around each of the AADERE model factors as well as any of the other 25 subcategories identified. And bridging or completely approaching any of the applicable topics above into the realm of deep quantitative analysis exponentially expands the specialty’s research scope.

While annual salary equity is a fundamental aperture through which we can explore the nature of the experiences of Black hospitality and tourism professionals and others, it is the most basic of the four material dimensions that affect individual fiscal reality. The sum of the hierarchically consequential dimensions of (1) annual salary (2) total annual
job compensation (3) total annual income, and finally (4) overall wealth significantly shapes the social and life chances of its beneficiaries.

So although this study is hugely informative and contributory, its underlying focus on salary ignores the reality that total annual job compensation, total annual income, and overall wealth further distinguish participants from each other as well as others. In short, all of the aforementioned research questions and designs can be framed within the additional three dimensions. Thus the possibilities are numerous, and the study of high-salaried Black hospitality and tourism professionals and Black issues in hospitality and tourism broadly is off to a roaring start!
AFTERWARD

FLIP MODE: A POST-ANALYTIC SELF-REFLECTION

In the spirit of Busta Rhymes (How you doin’?, per the fabulous Wendy Williams) and the squad for whom this section is titled, this segment is the remix to the section in chapter one of this document, labeled Stance. It encompasses more detailed information about who I am. What follows is an addendum—a post analytic self-reflection spurred, for example, by ongoing dissertation advisement, reflections on study participant feedback, an encounter with Collins’ (2005) Black Sexual Politics, deeper thinking about the tone of several of the pieces in Rothenberg’s (2004) anthology, and a consciousness of contemporary social and political issues.

After completing my one year fellowship at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania in March of 2008, I am currently unemployed and focused full-time on finalizing my dissertation. My job status incidentally occurred quite accidentally. Although I received three full-time university faculty offers prior to the 2008 fall semester, two of which were tenure track positions that did not require me to have completed my doctoral program prior, I knowingly accepted an Assistant Professorship at a third institution which obligated me to finalize my course of study in order to assume the post. Considering that this overseas institution was the most prestigious of the three from a research perspective, I reasoned that boxing myself into a do or die situation would force me to rapidly conclude my work. While I had met wonderful professionals and students and had great on-site experiences at each of the domestic teaching university programs and was well aware that neither had any specific research publication requirements, I chose to challenge myself differently by gaining international expertise via a three-year
contracted, non-tenure track, post with a rigorous expectation of publication in specified top research journals. Well, the plan fell apart after I failed to complete my PhD in time and ended up with no appointment.

Since I now fully appreciate that teaching and engaging students is my passion but know that I can get caught up in the frenzy of multiple load course preparation, delivery, and student assessment and mentoring, I feel that everything that happened though challenging to deal with has been for the best. Focusing my energy on wrapping up my dissertation as soon as possible rather than obtaining a last minute fall 2008 or spring 2009 teaching assignment without completing my PhD or even more unproductively taking an unrelated job just to maintain my previous income has certainly paid off. Although the decision has been debilitating financially, I am ultimately happy with the choice because I feel that I can more confidently and aggressively negotiate employment having finally reached this pinnacle of academic achievement in erudite fashion.

It has been quite interesting to be unemployed while interviewing study participants as much as seven years younger than me who all hold relatively high positions for which they are paid in excess of $100,000. Not only am I currently jobless, but the maximum salary that I have earned in the past is $54,500 (as a full-time, nine-month Assistant Professor) and I have never grossed more than $70,000 in a single year from all employment sources. And though I am in the process of applying for a faculty appointment beginning in fall 2009 and fully expect my new salary to exceed my highest past gross, my maxed student loans and subsistence income of less than $25,000 annually render me, though admittedly nontraditional, a starving college student in all the quintessentially important ways.
Perhaps not incidentally, I am a person in the Hubbard-ian (Hubbard, 2004) sense of the word. That is, I think of myself sexually in unfettered terms. And while I slept exclusively with womyn prior to my (undergraduate) college years, began sleeping with men during college (without overlap), and have not slept with a womyn in at least the last 20 years, I feel no pressure to define myself as homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, questioning, or in any particular way at all. Hubbard’s contention that we write our own sexual scripts based on parental advice and broader social notions of what is and is not appropriate makes sense to me. And as a situational celibate for the last several months who continues to be drawn to men as opposed to womyn or some other category of persons, I refuse to close any doors or define myself by what I did months or decades ago. Having said that, I am inclined (and indeed feel obligated) to have an informative discussion prior to having sex with anyone who I do not perceive to be male. And while I would stop short of deeming such conversations universally obligatory and appreciate though largely disagree with the rationale that it does not matter, the status of our national sexual discourse and thinking push me in this direction if only for the benefit and respect of my partner.

There are numerous and complex reasons why this is the case. First of all, I don’t want to block any potential blessings. And let me be clear, although I think that I wish there were, there is no ambiguity or confusion about what excites or turns me on emotionally or sexually at present. For even as celibate as fate, faith, and frenetically framing intellectual thought, or some combination of the aforementioned, would have it, when I masturbate, daydream, and almost always even when I dream, it is a man’s form that I see. And while I hope and like to think that I am ultimately open to any conjugal
possibility (probable overstatement) or the possibility of none at all (definitely at the bottom of any wish list), when I dream (as the R&B turned gospel crooner Regina Belle might say), I dream in (specific) colors. More on that point later.

This is probably as good a time as any, however, for me to point out that in crass family terms (and I apologize if gay lingo is not your forte), I am a top as opposed to a bottom. And while the feminist, critical theorist, humynist side of me believes this should be irrelevant, it is what it is; and my qualitative, researcher side suspects that it is somehow problematic. And although this potentially is too much information even for the farce that this portion of the paper has become, from a certain perspective, it is useful to admit that there have been two situations or, more specifically, two people (and more than a few situations) with whom I was not a top. The first and serial situation occurred nearly 20 years ago and was quite enjoyable. The second occurred about five years after the first and was a definite and unpleasant waste of my time except that it helped me finally determine that this is something that I can very easily do without. And while the serendipitous elements of my nature perhaps prevent future occurrences from being ruled out, I find the likelihood exceedingly remote.

The greater concern here is how much of my lack of desire for bottom action, if you will (though this phrasing is at least peripherally proscriptive and inopportune limiting from an opposite view—enjoy the pun you can), is simple preference and how much is a function of a gendered paradigm that renders womyn, and by extension even temporarily submissive or femyle-acting men, subordinate and morally, politically, and socially particularized. While part of me decries socially constructed roles in sexual or conjugal relationships, I acknowledge that being a top genuinely feels right to me and appreciate
that I am socially disadvantaged as a man attracted to other men. I recognize, however, that the societal stigma would be even worse if I could be painted as a man-whore from a bottom perspective. It is all a bit complicated. And though I am not sure whether these revelations make me brave, vulgar, foolish, some combination of these, or something else entirely, I am certain that this information is relevant to your reading of my perspective.

To give you and me a break, though, let us turn our attention to another area. For your information, I am a dark-skinned, 6’1”, 225 pound-ish, Black man who is classically attracted to light-skinned guys. (Hang in there, the break is coming.) As a decidedly qualitative researcher and scholar of Black issues not only in hospitality and tourism but also in contemporary issues broadly, I question whether my penchant for lighter skinned Black, Latino, and even White guys is a matter of simple preference or whether this fascination is immediately problematic and complexly linked to some incarnation of colorism or internal racism.

There are times, places, and circumstances in which I choose not to reveal my orientation for fear that it will render me even further marginalized than I might already be in the White male-dominated, patriarchal society that I regularly and vociferously critique even as I am proud to call home. My perspective as a critical, feminist, humynist, radical may cause others to leap to conclusions about who I ultimately am and what I deeply believe. And while some of these assumptions are helpful, useful, and accurate, I hope that you remain willing to fairly gauge my presentation of the participant data.

I say the things I have said not simply to be salacious but to provide a clear view of the lens through which I see the world. It is what it is. I am what I am. And I do what I do since, in the words of the Burberry-ian rapstress Foxy Brown, “It’s necessary…” This is
the dawn of a new stream of hospitality and tourism research. There are no significant studies of high salaried Black hospitality and tourism professionals, and the substantial ground broken here is rich with candid, important, and useful information that can help diversify, enrich, and modernize an industry struggling to achieve the meritorious (and merit-based) ideals of its corporate rhetoric.

Let me share some information about my political philosophy and perspective. Because this study was conducted in the final months leading up to the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, interviewees made a number of references to Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, in particular. Since you surely gather by now that my politics are heavily democratic- and left-leaning (though I am fiercely independent and given to calling all spades, *spades* and letting the proverbial chips fall where they may) let me add that I am one of those Democrats that was absolutely fanatic about Hillary while equally certain that sxe would prevail over Barack in the primaries. Okay, so I was wrong on that one.

Although I was a committed Hill-raiser who contributed to the campaign and played a small part in getting Chelsea to speak at the university where I was employed, I was clear early on that I really did not have any problems with Obama. I always liked him personally, recognized that he was a wonderful speaker and activist, was proud of the fact that he was essentially Black, and considered him someone whose star was appropriately on the rise. Moreover, I always told those with whom I vehemently disagreed that if Barack prevailed I would have no problems supporting him as my issue was not that Obama was a good choice but rather that Clinton was more qualified and better prepared.

Also, I was unconvinced by the argument that it would be more historic and improbable for Barack Obama to become president than Hillary Clinton because he is
Black in total contrast to all past presidents while sxe, though femyle, would just be the latest in a long line of White commanders-in-chief. Though I frequently rejoined that Barack’s election would be no more historic than Hillary’s since our country has never had a Black or a femyle president, I often reasoned that it would actually be more historic for Hillary to win because the change that Barack’s candidacy offered was closer to our nation’s historical order. While conceding that racism has always been the most taboo subject of national discourse, I suggested the reason gender has never risen to an equal point is because it is natural to most Americans that womyn should follow men in all cases where they are allowed to participate at all.

My common illustrations in such dialogues are that Black men received the right to vote before all womyn, a Black man was seated on the supreme court before a womyn was, and since most of my friends are relatively religious or spiritual, I point out that there are many churches and institutions in our society where womyn still are not permitted to hold the top position. In many Black Baptist churches, for instance, womyn are not even allowed to preach or speak from the main pulpit. In deeper or more complex discussions I usually interrogate smaller, but arguably equally dangerous oddities like the male door-opening ritual (Frye, 2004) and the fact that more often than not when an opposite couple (Thanks for the lingo, Carrie Prejean!) gets into their car, the man heads to the driver’s side while the femyle heads to the passenger side. While these examples may seem absurd from a myopic perspective, as Frye would suggest, a macroscopic look reveals the complexity of the underlying philosophies. I often continue by questioning why it is that a womyn most commonly takes a man’s last name after marriage and one man classically is expected to give his daughter away to another man on wedding day.
Such traditions and serially-gendered processes render womyn subordinate to men and make it immediately understandable that democratic voters of all races would find it unpalatable to choose a womyn as the presidential nominee of a major political party.

As a Black man who grew up in the Deep South and has lived in several states in various regions of the continental U.S., I recognize that racism is a pervasive problem. I suspect, moreover, that though my faith in the candidacy of Hillary Clinton was rooted in her national distinction at least since the days of the Watergate Scandal, many of the folks who nearly pushed her over the top did so: (1) because sxe is White and they felt more comfortable putting forth a White candidate, and (2) because sxe is married to former President Bill Clinton, whose maleness and positional expertise gave them comfort that sxe would not mess things up terribly as long as he was by her side.

Although I was certain that I would immediately back Barack if Hillary did not become the Democratic nominee, something within me changed after Barack clinched the nomination but refused to select Hillary as his running mate. I was so furious with Barack’s decision that I seriously considered not voting for him in the general election.

Given my politics, however, there was no way I was going to vote for the new John McCain. My seriously considered alternative was simply to forgo a presidential ballot choice. Because of my spiritual upbringing and convictions, interestingly, there is at least a possibility that the old/real John McCain and Sarah Palin might have gotten my vote. I respect John McCain immensely though he annoyed me to no end as he abandoned most of his moderate views in his bid for the Republican nomination and the presidency.

While friends and the popular media were aghast at the thought of a Vice President Palin, I had a great deal of trust in who I perceive to be the real Sarah Palin. I rather liked
her and felt that she would make many good decisions if left to her own moral compass and rational judgment. And while I summarily dismissed the high-priced clothing and magazine question controversies and felt that concerns about her ability to intelligently engage the public were overblown, there were plenty of real Palin moments that aligned with the new McCain package and made serious consideration of the Republican ticket roundly unconscionable even if I could get past the party’s incongruous platform.

Given my limited faith in the American public’s willingness to select a Black man as president of the United States, however, I was glad that none of the other Republicans were in danger of making it. I had always hoped that John McCain clenched the nomination just on the grounds that many people in this country are racist and might not be able to do the Obama thing, and none of the other candidates in the field, with the possible exception of Mike Huckabee, gave me any level of comfort that American life post-Bush would demonstrably improve if the election did not go the Democrats way.

I finally voted for Obama, by the way, since he and Biden clearly constituted a better way forward for the country. And, yes, this was in spite of the small part of me that hoped that Obama would lose (1) because he slighted Clinton and (2) because it would provide continued evidence of the insidiousness of racial prejudice in our society. Complicated, problematic, I know.

As terrible as it sounds, by the way, I had fingers and toes crossed that the U.S. economy would completely collapse before the end of 2008 so that no one could continue to deny that the country was in a recession and so that the only direction left for the markets to go during President Obama’s administration would be up. I know all of this is
horribly wrong, but I am just telling you what really happened and how I felt. (Who knew that Rush Limbaugh and I had so much in common?)

My better angels prevailed in the election booth, in part, because I was wholly unwilling to be party to even four more years of domestic and internationally arrogant, destructive, and downright unkind, ungentle, and divisive Republican shenanigans. Ultimately, I feel that what needed to happen overall did. Let me state that this is not automatic. I do not, for example, feel that George W. Bush (Seriously? Seriously.—ala Grey’s Anatomy) and Dick (ass-wipe) Cheney needed to defeat John Kerry (Go Theresa!) and John Edwards (so disappointing) or Al Gore (sigh) and Joe Lieberman (religion matters) for that matter.

The point I am making is that President Barack Obama (Always loved Michelle!) really does feel like the right person for the right time. Nevertheless, my feminist, critical theorist, and humynist core still has difficulty reconciling the fact that the amply qualified and seasoned Hillary was crassly passed over by the political and media machinery that anointed the less experienced Barack. I do recognize, by the way, that it was not simply a matter of significant executive or national political experience as I have always preferred Obama to, say, Chris Dodd or Mitt Romney. And while this is all water under the proverbial bridge that I have come to appreciate, I just wanted to wade briefly to help you understand my frames of reference.

Okay, about Obama and the Black thing. Yes, of course, Obama is Black—from a conventionally imprecise, Omi and Winant (2004) hypo-descent, and jacked-up kind of perspective. In actuality, however, he is just as White as he is Black. Now I appreciate the cultural futility of harping on this point and understand that there are few immediately
accessible labels for apposite categorization. Although Obama certainly is American, the reality is that he was reared in a White environment without his Kenyan father and there are differences between people like him and the progeny of Blacks with recent roots in the thorny milieu of African slavery in the U.S. It matters that his father is Kenyan and that Barack I, like many of his compatriots, could translate African privilege into an advanced American education. And though none of us should be faulted or unduly maligned by unearned advantages, it is instructive—even in the face of a reportedly modest upbringing—to highlight the hidden benefit in a largely White society of being the son of an accomplished scholar, reared by a White mom and White grandparents.

And let me be clear, the fact as a roots African-American that my father is a bachelor’s degreeed pastor, my stepmother is a master’s and specialist-educated Assistant Pastor and English secondary school teacher, and my momma was a college-educated factory worker and church layperson who consistently read with me but passed away when I was a very young means that I, too, am somewhat privileged. This despite being mostly reared by loving, motivational, and working class grandparents with less than ninth grade educations. My arrival at Head Start as an excellent reader with a working knowledge of numbers and a proper Northern accent rendered me ahead of my peers and eventually use to high expectations, achievement, and the perception that I was a smart Black kid. Nevertheless, I can recount stories of riding to church past the 2,000-head dairy farm owned by the Whites that used to own our family; being called nigger in grade school; sitting in an all-Black waiting room across the hall from an all-White one at the local health department; eating lunch in my stridently self-segregated high school cafeteria with the Black femyles in my advanced classes that had advised me it was not
acceptable to eat with my White male peers; joining my brother round a Commodore 64 as the first two Black kids in talented and gifted class; being denied an academic award because of my race; and witnessing alternate disbelief and dissatisfaction on the faces of Whites after winning a full, four-year scholarship to a prestigious, out-of-state university.

I enjoyed a certain level of privilege relative to my Black male peers, in particular, because of my seemingly remarkable, exception-to-the-rule intelligence and decorum. For example, I received the most lengthy Easter, Christmas, and holiday speeches at church along with my older brother and distinguished myself as a star Sunday School student; served as president of my local and county 4-H Clubs; excelled at the tuba in band; served as an officer of the Beta Club, our campus honorary society; sat on student council throughout high school and eventually become senior class and student body president; lobbied for and participating in the school’s first ever salt-n-pepper prom; and was voted most likely to succeed along with my favorite cousin. Although such accomplishments empowered and set me apart from others at times, they have never exempted me from the social structural racism that complicates my educational, professional, and academic journey.

So it is not that I believe Barack Obama does not deserve to be where he is. He certainly does. And though he already is doing a great job under difficult conditions, I anticipate even better results in the future. It is clear to me, however, that he is not a regular Black person. While I recognize the absurdity of employing the word regular here and eschew the business of purifying the race, partially because I realize that as Black as I consider myself via skin color and facial features at the very least, I and any number of others could easily be ostracized or excised by those who consider themselves
Blacker still for any number of reasons. Obama’s example, however racially complex, is particularly inspirational to me just as it undoubtedly is for other Blacks, mixed persons, and regular people of all races, though perhaps and even necessarily for different reasons.

My greater point is that while I choose to step up my game and be encouraged by the fact that Barack Hussein Obama ascended to the presidency of the United States, my decision is as deliberate as it is cautious. For though Obama and others rhetorically cite his election as proof that all doors are now open to Blacks, womyn, and certain others, I persist to fight for equal opportunity not only because it is morally and socially necessary and right but also because justice is not universally manifest and self-evident as many appear to believe. Vigilance, activism, and perseverance are critical because there is still much social work to do in our great nation. It is odd, indeed, to expect womyn to celebrate the near term inevitability of a femyle president when it has never happened, when it took 50 years for womyn to receive the vote that Black men were afforded in 1870, and since it was 14 years after Thurgood Marshall’s appointment that a womyn was seated on our highest court.

Although President Obama is Black in a manner of speaking, I am still not convinced that a regular Black person can become president of the United States even though a series of regular White men have. I leave room, however, for the possibility that I may be as wrong as I was about America’s readiness for an Obama presidency. My deep aversion to Barack in light of Hillary, incidentally, was not merely a reflection of my reluctance to believe that America would put him in office. My concern more broadly, for example, is that there is no way a Carol Moseley Braun, Condoleezza Rice, a Maxine Waters, or a similarly credentialed Michelle Obama would have made it though I could have gotten
behind all four. And rather than limiting choices to the oft mentioned Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton, though either at the time of their running was a fine choice by me, I would offer a Harold Ford, Jr. or a Duvall Patrick since I feel their realities as roots African-Americans would lend more credence to the notion that America has truly changed. For surely it was Obama’s enchantingly racially ambiguous, conveniently non-controversial, little bit of sports and hip-hop, masculine, and laidback persona that won the day. And while I do not consider myself a hater and try not to knock Obama for who he is and genuinely appears to be, it troubles me that the absence of these things would have resulted in defeat for an equally or more qualified roots African-American.

While I championed Hillary Clinton’s candidacy, I was frustrated by Obama’s forced decision to break ties with his long time church home and minister because I did not have a problem with the essence of Reverend Wright’s commentary. I felt that rather than validate majority America’s injured feelings, Obama’s focus should have been on more poignantly highlighting the underlying truth that this is a prejudicial society littered with myriad and occasionally deep pockets of racism. And though I also faulted Hillary for condemning Reverend Wright’s comments, Obama’s reaction here along with his failure to attend Tavis Smiley’s annual State of the Black Union in 2008, though Clinton chose to participate, deepened my concern that he is disinclined to go to the mat for Blacks on certain issues for fear of charges of racial pandering. Because I viewed Clinton and Obama essentially as two peas in a pod on the major issues facing our nation, Hillary struck me as the obvious choice given her seniority and additional experience. Also, because sxe could ill afford not to pander to the Black community as Barack is privileged to do, I felt that sxe was better positioned to address our particularized concerns.
While I recognize that subcategorizing or quibbling over racial categories for people like Barack Obama, Halle Berry, Mariah Carey, Soledad O’Brien, Colin Powell, and Tiger Woods is awkward, I am equally troubled by the tendency of the majority to accept the octoroon, the mixed, and the mulatto long before the indisputably Black and the non-mixed. I refuse to accept this as the natural order of things. I choose to speak out against this lopsided and tacit acceptance and challenge folks to truly accept others regardless of the color of their skin, the gender of their being, the ability of their bodies, the orientation of their sexuality, the age of their years, and the class of their fiscal wherewithal.

Just as I took issue with the misogynistic debasement of Sarah Palin in the global public square, I was disturbed by the ageism and derision with which John McCain’s candidacy was widely received. We need to check our collective attitudes and challenge all of our -ist-ish tendencies. And while valid considerations like age should continue to be weighed in a presidential selection, we ought both to be respectful and to keep up with the medical reality of our times. A realistic consideration of a candidate’s actual life expectancy via a current and historical medical analysis, for instance, is wholly sufficient and much more appropriate. The relevant question in McCain’s case should simply have been his health status. Once the response was good, it should have been a non-issue. Not only is the folly of the age debate highlighted by McCain’s 90+ year-old mother, but the cultural relativism of age is evident when one considers, for example, the papacy or the historical leaders of the Mormon Church where longevity and wisdom are valued as positives and the ascension of a man (just putting that out there) under the age of 80 is virtually impossible.
I was perturbed that Americans expressed the most reservations with age, followed by
gender, and then by race in the identity politics of assessed presidential consideration.
Though it weirdly felt good at a level that people convey fewer issues with race than I
imagined, it bothered (though did not surprise) me that any of these issues polled as
problematic for the American electorate. True social equality is so necessary as way too
many of us shamefully think it okay to grossly and irrationally problematize difference.

Moving from politics to religion let me mention that I have not attended church
regularly in 15 years. (Yikes!) And though spirituality is a central part of my life and
lens, I consider myself a sort of Joel Osteen, *Bobby Jones Gospel Hour, Sunday Best,*
gospel CD’s kind of Christian who respects people of all faiths or none at all and steers
clear of presenting myself as any kind of model or example for fear that I might divert
someone else from the straight and narrow. And while it sort of bothers me not to go to
church on a regular basis, this occurs, in part, because I generally do not feel very
comfortable there. I rarely enjoy myself as much as I would like, and because I am a
nontraditional person with nonstandard beliefs about many things and not the kind of
person who would eternally quench his beliefs I choose not to put myself and especially
others in an awkward situation.

And then there are my personal contradictions. Surprising though it may be, for
instance, I am old-fashioned and religious enough to find fornication spiritually
reprehensible though not especially restraining as any moral ground I hold on the subject
is infinitely less sure than that of, say, Levi Johnston and Bristol Palin.

Given my enduring inclinations, I rather fancy establishing my own religious
gathering where friends can gather and worship the God of my experience from a more
earnest, honest, and safe perspective or place with wonderful music and eat good food in the tradition of the movie and television series *Soul Food*. I like the idea of a Sunday gospel brunch void of pretense about personal perfection and open to reviewing scripture and relevant readings in historical, contemporary, and spiritual terms and discussing issues of the day in ways that foster righteous living, generous compassion, and humynist activism. Though God is hugely important to me, I have yet to discover a religious model that speaks truth to my reality and warrants dutiful adherence. And while I am not interested in a perfect fellowship as a wholly imperfect being, I need more than I have seen and am hopeful that I will find it soon.

Let me share for the record that my father, stepmother, older brother, and baby sister are all ministers and/or preachers to varying positional and educational degrees. And having come of age as a, in many if not most ways, relatively good preacher’s kid, I would venture to guess that I currently am the most Biblically wicked (as complicated as I find that) of the five children that my three parents produced. For your information, I grew up in a sanctified, holy-rolling, tongue-speaking, Pentecostal church where my father was the pastor, and I am still a bit of a sucker for the kind of old school preaching and order of service that is characterized by a vociferous call and response and often inclusive of a hearty shout or dance session and a ministerial laying on of hands. And though this is far above and beyond the kind of gathering I alluded to previously, it is a fix that I occasionally seek via late night or early Sunday morning television.

While I practice and preach respect and acceptance for all, I admit that as fallible and prejudiced humyn beings it is impossible to “always do the right thing” (despite this lofty advice from Da Mayor in Spike Lee’s 1989 epic). This is especially true when and where
fair-minded people disagree about what the right thing is. Although I know that it is important to accept people equally and fairly despite ability, for example, I was challenged once when I came face to face with a beautiful womyn who appeared to be perfectly normal in every way except that sxe had no arms. And though I tried not to show it in an effort not to embarrass her or myself, I realize that since such efforts are not easy for me they are undoubtedly orders more frustrating for the person on the other end of the different ability.

As well, I once had a student with a clearly masculine name. And while I considered myself cosmopolitan enough to realize that the individual was likely born as a womyn but interested in living as a man, I was completely taken aback weeks into the semester when I went to the restroom one evening and inadvertently ran into him using a urinal. Though I truly felt like it made no difference and I did not and should not care, I was nevertheless unsettled and knew that it was my responsibility to get back on track.

While serving as an advisor the following semester, I ended up enrolling the student for classes in a semi-public setting. Although I considered myself completely comfortable with the situation by this time, I remember sitting next to a colleague and after appropriately utilizing the student’s name, being horrified as I inexplicably used the pronoun sxe in rapid succession despite having every intention of being politically and logistically correct. This, by the way, is an example of a time when I was especially grateful that I am not light-skinned or White since the blood that rushed to my face did not result in a brilliant blush that would have made the situation even worse.

And while I could provide many more examples of the prejudices with which I personally struggle, a final recurring case is Black-White dating or marriage. Although I
feel that I am not in any way opposed to interracial coupling, I dislike the fact that, as some of my contemporaries would say, “I feel some type of way” about heterosexual Black-White couples in particular. The feeling is completely absurd in light of the fact that I have dated and slept with multiple White men and feel like I basically have no problem with it, though I admittedly think it best to stick with Blacks and Latinos.

I seriously wonder whether I have deeper problems with White femyles, however. I use to worry about my baby brother who seems to date womyn with no regard to race, as I technically feel everyone probably should be able to. Because I grew up in a state and environment where it was completely unacceptable for a Black man, in particular, to date or sexually approach a White femyle, however, I wonder how much of my historical and present disinterest in White femyles is due to the messages and lessons of my youth. As late as 1988, a year after I entered undergrad, after all, I remember receiving a call from someone back home in Mississippi who told me that an acquaintance of mine had been abducted for several days and had some K’s (the alphabetical letter) carved into his back because he had been spending time with a White girl. My concern here is not a lamentation for my absolute non-attraction to White womyn. Rather it is a function of an embarrassingly enduring unease though I am getting closer to effortlessly processing the phenomenon. Of course, I work hard not to avoid prolonged glances or any unusual facial signs both because I feel like I do not and should not really care and because I do not wish, again, to discomfort others or myself.

A major point of the discussion of my ability-, gender-, and racially-prejudiced encounters above is that while it is important to appear to engage people equally without undue regard for differences, it is at least as imperative to actually do the right thing. So
while it is admirable to possess the honesty and self-awareness to recognize one’s shortcomings, it is quite another to vigorously endeavor truly to treat others fairly.

A distressing fact is that in each of the aforementioned cases it was my goal not to be bigoted. Interestingly, I think of my thoughts and actions here in the way I imagine some Whites think about interactions with Blacks. While I believe that I harbored no genuine dislike or prejudice, upon deeper reflection it is clear that my thoughts, actions, and reactions however concealed are problematic. Thus I commit to redoubling my internal confrontation efforts in order to significantly increase the chances not only that my current and future actions are appropriate but also in the hopes that my fundamental thought processes will prove less dubious over time.

Although I realize that many of these musings may make me seem quite bizarre from certain perspectives, I assure you that I am not demented, or at least do not consider myself so, even as I am not overly concerned with other people’s perceptions. My gravitation to the sentiment of the phrase *it is what it is*, in fact, is linked partially with a brief introspective entitled *Part of the story of IT* that I produced as an undergrad some 20 years ago. The point, if you have not gathered, is that *I am what I am* in all of its quasi-Biblically-referencing glory. And *it is what it is* really denotes that *IT is what IT is*, where *Ivan Turnipseed is what Ivan Turnipseed is* as *I am what I am* insofar as I cannot actually change much of who I am and have become about as comfortable in my own skin as I reasonably can—given that its dark hue is heavy and blighted as a result of life, history, and the daily grind of the reality that is my world juxtaposed with my previously discussed tendencies, thoughts, and seeming contradictions. While you make of this what you will, I sincerely request that you, in the words of the indubitably legendary hip-
hop/pop chanteuse Beyoncé Knowles, “accept me, flaws and all.” When and where it concerns me most is at the point where you would refuse to go engage this text which fundamentally and superficially is about HSBHTP’s and what relevance their experience has to who and what you and I are and how it together with that reality can positively impact the experiences of others.

Even as I celebrate the veritable ambiguity of my ability, class, race, age, gender, and sexuality at a minimum, I am grateful that I am physically and mentally able to perform above the average. And though my current financial situation is arguably lower class, I fortunately anticipate a return to at least middle class standing within a matter of months. While I clearly and obviously present as Black without stretching anyone’s imagination or creating disagreement among typically-minded Americans interestingly, the grand sociologically-established designation of race as a purely social construct (Omi & Winant, 2004) renders me only contextually so. And although age and sex are probably my least ambiguous descriptors, the fact that my age at the time of your reading of this text is different in ordinary numerical terms than when I wrote it—not to mention that one ages, at least, by the second—and I am as able as most to change the sex of my birth though I could not imagine such an affront on my person and am mortified at the thought while not wishing to impugn those who harbor or have acted on such thoughts.

While the ambiguity of my sexuality has already been discussed, I might add that I rather hope, I think, that I one day meet a womyn to whom I am genuinely attracted. From a certain perspective, I would not be the by-product of the social production that I am if I did not possess such potentially, though hopefully not, foolish thoughts. While the operational part of my Gemini being longs for a fantastical wedding to the erudite and
dashing gentleman who loves me as much as I love him, the other pines for the ridiculous normality and societal ease of the learned and gorgeous gentlewomyn who loves me as much as I love her.

Certainly the latter desire is rooted at least partly in the fear that the sexual script I am writing, though it seems and feels right and honest, may not be so in the sight of the God that I love, and from Whom I draw strength daily. And given the grand consequence of deliberately wayward and reprobate behavior, I pray often that God leads me to that which is good, right, and moral in the context of my actuality.

Educationally and professionally, while there is more that I ultimately wish to accomplish, it is notable that once this PhD is finalized I will consider myself more educated and better experienced than the average doctoral hospitality grad. The benefit of nearly seven years of direct industry experience, mostly at supervisory and junior management levels; the experience on more than 60 occasions to prep and deliver course material and assess and mentor university and college students; and a record of more than 50 publications, presentations, and invited speaking engagements places me well above the average of less than five years of industry experience; less than five classes; and few articles, presentations, and speaking engagements.

Just as I suspect that prejudice and structural inequality negatively impact the extraordinarily prepared and super-accomplished Black managers in this study, I am concerned that my superior achievement may render me at best on a par with peers who have done significantly less. And even as the study participants retain their zealous drives for excellence, look past unfair challenges, and maximize extended opportunities, I intend to continually put my best foot forward, seize opportunities when and where they present
themselves, and strive sincerely to expect fair consideration everywhere I apply and anticipate and offer appropriate support and inclusion in every appointment.
APPENDIX

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Barry – The Individual Manager

Barry is a dark-skinned, 40-44 year old, vice president for a city convention and visitors bureau. He holds both a bachelor’s and an MBA, and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. Barry laments that, “We’re always defined by our least common denominator” and are “never just looked at as individuals doing our job.”

Benny – The Promoted Manager

Benny is a “fairer-skinned,” 30-34 year old, vice president plus with a large gaming company. He holds both a bachelor’s and an MBA, and earns between $150,000 and $199,999 a year. Benny advises that, “You gotta have…a Don King…somebody to promote you and promote your work.”

Betty – The Wage Gap Manager

Betty is a light-skinned, 50-54 year old, general manager at a large hotel. She holds a bachelor’s degree, earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year, and remarks, “I think that more than likely if I were male, that I would probably, most likely, just by statistics, be earning more.”

Danny – The Southern Strategy Officer

Danny is a “black cherry, dark-brown,” 50-54 year old, vice president plus for a large gaming company. He holds a bachelor’s degree and earns $250,000 or more annually. “The rules of what we [were] taught as a Southerner [were that] you’ve got to be twice as good,” says Danny. “And so you must resolve yourself to that reality and engage in this world, understanding that that’s what you’ve got to do.”
**Debby – The Know-How Manager**

Debby is a lighter-skinned, 35-39 year old, general manager of a boutique catering company. Sxe holds both a bachelor’s and an MBA, and earns between $150,000 and $199,999 a year. “At the end of the day it’s food on plates,” says Debby. “But…people respect my education because I’m able to take the tools that I know and give them to people so that we can start to save money and food costs.”

**Harry – Homegrown World Citizen**

Harry is a “darker”-skinned, 60-64 year old, “chairman” of a university hotel and restaurant management department. He holds a bachelor’s, a master’s, and a doctorate degree, and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 annually. Before the age of 10, Harry “somehow acquired a world view…that the rest of the world looked a lot more like me than what is portrayed in the United States.”

**Joeey – The Prince of Providence**

Joeey is a dark-skinned, 35-39 year old, corporate manager in the headquarters of an upscale hotel company. He has some college education, but does not have a college degree, and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. Joeey “just happen[s] to be…blessed and highly favored” and “end up in the right situations at the right time.”

**Kelly – The Solo Manager**

Kelly falls in “the lighter group” and is a 30-34 year old, vice president with a large gaming company. Sxe holds both a bachelor’s and an MMH, and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. Kelly reveals that “being a Black femyle…has left me always on the minority side because traditionally there is only one (Black or femyle) on any executive team.” “There’s a different level of scrutiny…of being the only one,” sxe adds.
Larry – The African American Executive

Larry is a dark-skinned, 45-49 year old, senior vice president with a large international hotel corporation. He holds both a bachelor’s degree and an MBA, and earns $250,000 or more a year. “I’ve got a regular business role that I am responsible for, and then there’s all the other stuff that goes into being an African-American executive….I get a little extra for that—and I should,” Larry submits.

Lenny – The Driven Manager

Lenny, who is “probably in the dark-skinned group,” is a 45-49 year old, vice president and manager for a very large hotel. He has some college education, but does not possess a college degree, and he earns between $200,000 and $249,999 annually. “I’m so driven that what I’ve done before…is the past,” Lenny says. “Moving forward is of extreme importance for me.”

Nelly – Senior Sister Girl

Nelly is a light-skinned, 40-44 year old, regional vice president for a major hotel corporation. She holds both a bachelor’s degree and a master’s of business administration (MBA) and earns between $200,000 and $249,999 annually. “Now I understand,” Nelly explains, “where I didn’t before what it’s like to have people subordinate to you who probably are your sisters—your sister girls.”

Patty – The Comfortable Director

Patty is a “light brown-skinned,” 55-59 year old, director with a national non-profit that builds bridges between corporate America and minority-owned ventures. She holds a bachelor’s degree and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. Patty reveals, “I’m
not a nine-to-five person. I’ve never wanted to open my own business. I’m not a risk

taker. I wanna be very safe. I’m alright with being number two. I’m not ambitious.”

**Penny – The Value Manager**

Penny is a light-skinned, 40-44 year old, general manager of a medium-sized hotel.
Sxe holds a bachelor’s degree and earns between $100,000 and $149,999 a year. Penny
believes, “You have to create value for yourself every single day. Nothing is owed to
you. Nothing is guaranteed.”

**Perry – The Baller**

Perry is a dark-skinned, 45-49 year old, president of a very large hotel. He holds a
bachelor’s degree and earns over $250,000 annually. “I make good money,” Perry says.
“I’m an African-American ex-football player…and people like to hang around ex-jocks.”

**Ronny – The Personal Responsibility Advocate**

Ronny is a light-skinned, 50-54 year old, president and founder of a national non-
profit that provides development and training for hospitality employees. He holds a
bachelor’s degree and earns between $125,000 and $175,000 annually. Ronny maintains
that “we need to have a conversation about the…junk in our trunk!”

**Taffy – The Planned Manager**

Taffy, who is “the color of a brown bag,” is a 45-49 year old, general manager for a
major hotel chain. Sxe holds a bachelor’s degree and earns $150,000 to $199,999 a year.
Taffy says, “I planned my career out. I knew where I wanted to go early on and then [did]
whatever I needed to do to get to that point.”
**Tammy – The Total Compensation Manager**

Tammy is a darker-skinned, 40-44 year old, general manager for a very large hotel. She holds an associate’s degree and earns $150,000 to $199,999 annually. Tammy explains that, “Almost 50% of my additional salary comes from other places. And what matters to me is what I bring home and that’s significant compared to what my base is.”

**Terry – Home Aware**

Terry is a “not particularly dark, but by no means yellow,” 45-49 year old, global director for a support area of an international hotel company. He holds a bachelor’s degree, and earns between $100,000 and $149,000 a year. Terry works primarily from home but nevertheless remarks, “You think about [your Blackness]….Yeah, you feel it.”

**Tommy – The Discriminated Manager**

Tommy is a darker-skinned, 45-49 year old, area general manager for six hotels. He holds a bachelor’s degree and earns $150,000 to $199,999 annually. Tommy insists, “One of the things I try to do is not get stuck in this victim land.” “If you’re wondering whether I’m going to do something crazy, no, I’m over it. I’m done…This is the world I live in. So, no, I’m not surprised.”

**Vinny – The Representative Director**

Vinny is a “dark-skinned, but…not ‘burple’” 40-44 year old, director at a large gaming company. He has some college education but does not possess a college degree, and he earns $100,000 to $149,999 annually. Vinny contends, “In the eyes of my boss, [I] represent all things Black. So, I have to succeed at all costs, because I know after me they’re going to be looking and asking.”
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Associate Editor – Call and Response: The Scholarly Journal of the National Black Graduate Student Association (’07-’09)
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