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Sex as a Concealed Weapon

Race, Gender, and Incivility of Office Politics

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ABSTRACT—Within a highly sexualized American culture, men and women have used sex and flirtation to manipulate coworkers, even at the risk of sexual harassment charges. Therefore, this study will examine the question: Do Black men use flirtation to advance at work? In the fall 2014, 141 employed, Black men, ages 18–65 were asked about their workplace strategies to answer the central research question. The study theoretically considers historical, economic, and sociological parameters as a potential motivation for Black men to use flirtation as a work advancement strategy. Twelve percent confirmed they use flirtation to gain sex from employees, while 15% use flirtation to create a fun workplace. Fifty-three percent did not use flirtation in any part of their careers.

KEY WORDS—Flirtation, sex and office politics, Black male

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Introduction

A PHRASE COINED ON THE MICHAEL BAISDEN DAY-TIME TALK show, “being grown and sexy” in the Black community invites a series of complex dynamics for Blacks at work, at home and in entertainment. The dominant culture continues to buy and sell a gaze on Black bodies and then subscribe to expectations of Black sexual prowess and performance. Some of the most popular contemporary TV shows build on Black sexuality, images of well-tooled, high performing tawny bodies. Whether from the streets of New York City portrayed in the Starz mini-series *Power*, or from the posh monument interiors of Washington DC illustrated in *Scandal*, taboo sexual relationships and power fascinate audiences, boost ratings and attract millions of sponsorship dollars. As a result, Kerry Washington is the first Black woman to break into Forbes top 20 of highest paid TV actresses, ranking 8th in 2014 with a \$6 million salary (Forbes, 2014). Though broadcast on a secondary cable outlet, Starz Network, the mini-series *Power*, in its inaugural season averaged one million viewers. Further, Starz reported over 2.5 million watched the *Power* finale; in turn, the Starz Network has committed to a second season (Kissell, 2014).

In other media sectors, contemporary reports of gun violence illustrate how Black male power remains a perceived threat to mainstream culture. This perceived threat resides front and center in America’s consciousness and in the real lives ended by gun violence. Black men, subject to the assumption of being “too Black or too strong . . .” (Malcolm X, 1963) disproportionately wind up on the butt side of a gun as reported time and again with Michael Brown (Ferguson, MO), Oscar Grant (San Francisco, CA), and Trayvon Martin (Sanford, FL). These stories extend a violent trajectory bearing a countryside abound with ‘strange fruit’ in the murders of Emmet Till, Medgar Evers, Michael Griffith (Howard Beach, NY), Amadou Diallo (Brooklyn, NY), James Byrd (Jasper, TX), and Sean Bell (Queens, NY). These stories and the untold stories of 1000s of Black mens’ deaths that did not make the front pages can support the conclusion that has likened Black men to an “endangered species” (Lindsay, 2014).

The intersection of race, gender, and economics includes the continual recession status of Black unemployment. The Economic Policy Institute reports that Blacks have endured unemployment rates below recession levels over the last 50 years. The general population recession unemployment rate has hovered just below 7% at 6.7% (Austin, 2013). However, the Black

unemployment rate has been 11.6% on average for the last 50 years, 4.9% higher than the national average. Further, HUD reports that Blacks comprise close to 40% of the nation's homeless though Blacks are only 13% of the population (HUD, 2012).

Black men economically are one of the most disenfranchised groups in the United States. The *American Journal of Medicine* reports that the leading cause of death for Black men ages 15–34 is homicide (Hennekens, 2013, para.4). The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that Black men are six times more likely to go to prison than white men and 2.5 times more likely to go to prison than Hispanic men. Further, for Black men ages 30–39, one in ten Black men in this age group are incarcerated (Carson and Golinelli, 2013).

According to the Maynard Media Center on Structural Inequality, “The national college graduation rate for Black men is 33.1 % compared with 44.8 % for Black women.” However, the national graduation rate for all students is just above 57%. “Black men represent 7.9 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds in America but only 2.8 percent of undergraduates at public flagship universities” (Valrum, 2014, para 3–4).

Regardless, of race, all men graduate at rates lower than the national average. The white male graduation rate is 54.4%, Hispanic males graduate at 41.1% and Native Americans/Alaska natives graduate at 33.8%; nonetheless, Black men show the lowest graduation rates of any male population (Valrum, 2014).

Literature Review

Just as some politicians use flirtation to manipulate the media and cajole voters (Yates, 2010), those with an ulterior motive for their environment may utilize flirtation as a tool to control their surroundings. In the attempt to regain consistent economic standing, despite the constant threats to life and liberty, Black men, as any group given the aforementioned historical conditions, might use whatever means to progress through a system that remains seemingly curious about the sexual underpinnings tied to Black men. At the very least, flirtation is a strategy that might positively affect interpersonal communication and benevolence in an office environment (Frisbee, 2011).

Henningsen et al. (2008) pose the question “Why do we flirt?” Their study deems flirting as an ambiguous activity, yet those who engage in flirtation do such with motive and intent. Some people flirt just to have fun, to advance a cause or manipulate person's action. Some people flirt to en-

hance their self-esteem or to promote a sexual relationship; nonetheless, flirtation, while ambiguous, emerges from the goal to gain attention or affection from the receiver. A finding concluded, “men, more than women, thought flirting was sexual in nature” (p. 497). Therefore, unwelcomed flirtation, given its sexual base, can morph into sexual harassment.

In regard to workplace power and harassment, the aggressor asserts power to gain favor, position or resources (Cleveland and Kerst, 1993). Note that power isn’t limited to official power in the organizational chart. Personal power, expert power, and political power can be just as potent in establishing a power position. For example, in a United Kingdom study by National Association of Female Executives, findings revealed that 53% of female respondents were the target of sexual harassment from males holding a subordinate position on the organizational chart (Galen, Weber, and Cuneo, 1991). Another study reports 60% of executive women had the same experience (Sendoff, 1992). Adding race to the discourse of subordinates harassing female executives, Fayankinnu (2012) offers specifics of sexual harassment from male subordinate to female executives in Nigerian organizations. Female executives in this context reported the following:

Table 1. Sexual Harassment report

73.1%	reported Male subordinates grabbing their groin before female executives
64.2%	reported Male subordinates bragging of penal organ as hefty before female executives
61.2%	reported Male subordinates bragging of their sexual prowess in bed before female executives

Source: Fayankinnu, 2012, p. 46.

Further, men who use sex as a weapon also use non-sexual aggression to manipulate the work environment (Lim and Howard, 1998). Nonetheless, men who use flirtation make a direct connection with sexuality with ability to control the receiver (Pryor, Lavite, and Stoller, 1993). Some studies have confirmed that women use flirtation and sexual power to manipulate the workplace (Williams, 1999; Parisi 2006; Perper 1985; Berdahl, 2009; Henningsen et al. 2008). In Harper’s Bazar, 86% of women stated they would happily flirt with a male colleague if it meant they got their own way” (Roberts, 2007, para 3).

Bradley et al. conducted a study of 164 female MBA graduates. Close to half admitted to using sexual behavior to advance their careers (2005). However, the same researcher discovered that women who use their sexual prowess to advance actually were not taken seriously, promoted less quickly and earned lower wages. Flirting women might be viewed as competent but viewed as less authentic (Kray and Locke, 2008).

As other studies confirm that flirtation typically has a sexual intent (Abrahams 1994, Givens, 1978, Moore 1985) flirtation even when couched in horseplay (Chan 2001) can emerge as sexual harassment (Baraka 1995, Cleveland 1993). Further, flirtation in the work environment negatively affects work productivity (Kelly et al., 2005), psychological well-being (Bendahl 2009), and job satisfaction for those observing the flirtation (Salvaggio, 2011), even when flirtation is used to manage workplace romances (Boyd, 2010). Typically those who are financially disenfranchised are more likely to use flirtation, yet increase the risk of a sexual harassment complaint (Uggen, 2004).

Central Research Question

In this twisted milieu of fractured access, constant abuse, and sexualized stereotypes, the dominant culture may allow for sexual power to construct a potential pathway to economic empowerment. Most other roads for Black male empowerment have detours, death traps and money pits, while Black sex despite its taboo is commoditized, consumed and savored. In this context with lack of power and economic stability, any disenfranchised group may use the ambiguous power in sexual flirtation to manipulate the work environment. In regard to the research question and throughout the study, the designation “Black” applies to all populations in the African diaspora, African Americans, those of African descent from the West Indies, and other populations who would identify as Black yet outside of the “African American” category. With this historical and sociological context, the central research question is:

What is the extent of Black men using flirtation and sexual power to advance at work?

The aforementioned literature offered various insight on the intentions for those who flirt: and the impact of flirtation in the office. Therefore, the study has three subquestions:

Do Black men to suppress or bully others at work for economic gain use sexual flirtation?

What is the impact of Black men flirting on the job?

Is there a relationship between women being in leadership and the use of flirtation by Black men?

As the third sub-question in a correlational question the hypothesis are:

H₁. There is a relationship between gender of the person in power and use of flirtation.

H₀. There is no relationship between gender of the person in power and use of flirtation.

The third sub-question is derived from literature in which women admit to using flirtation to get ahead (Williams, 1999, Parisi 2006, Perper 1985, Berdahl, 2009, Henningsen et al., 2008). While these same studies reveal that women who use flirtation were well liked, the women also lost professional credibility.

Purpose of the Study

Workplace incivility and harassment have caught the attention of the American public with sexual harassment and gender discrimination reported at record highs at the EEOC, amounting to 31% of new complaints (Eeoc.gov) with over \$100 million of monetary resolutions for the 2011 year. The purpose of this study is to examine if sexual flirtation is a workplace strategy Black men use to get ahead, and if such strategies are prevalent does flirtation lead to a toxic workplace.

Conceptual Frame

United States history continues to suffer from what Condoleezza Rice noted as the “birth defect.” Her statement refers to the racial stain of American slavery upon which the country’s foundation sits (Schor, 2008). Racialized slavery in its brutality was interwoven with sex and desire for the Black body.

Both Black men and Black women were and still are in many cases, subjected to this Black sexual stereotype of being sexually insatiable, morally loose, irresponsible . . . “A freak” (Collins, 2005). The early laws of the

United States forbid “miscegenation” or interracial marriage. White women or men faced a malevolent stigma to openly admit to relations with those of African descent, though such relations still occurred “undercover.” Desire for Black bodies was taboo. Yet Black bodies remain the subject to the gaze of the dominant culture (Collins, 2005). The gaze continues in sports, music, and entertainment, where Black bodies and Black sexuality is still a commodity, bought and sold still by the dominant culture that still has a predilection for the “darker berry.”

In the absence of a legitimate recognition of power, the taboo can yield another type of power for those denied respectful or legitimate access to economic power structures. This power for Black men may emerge from the dominant culture’s desire to achieve or possess that, which should not be had, wanting the forbidden. In turn, the disenfranchised position of the Black male may access this power, which is an amalgam of unfortunate histories and current social economic plight. The intersection of race, gender, economic disenfranchisement and sexual power create the guiding conceptual lenses for this study.

In considering how Blacks may or may not use flirtation to influence work environments, the previous studies do not examine race as a factor, with the exception of the Nigerian study (Fayankinnu, 2012). Many of the studies considered gender, yet studies on flirtation included the use of or impact on women (Galen, Weber, Cuneo, 1991; Sendoff, 1992; Fayankinnu, 2012; Williams, 1999; Parisi 2006; Perper 1985; Berdahl, 2009; Henningsen et al., 2008; Bradley, 2005). This research considers the limiting socio-economic elements that affect Black men, and apply such these aforementioned elements to Black men’s motivation to use flirtation in the workspace. No other study considers the voices from Black men about Black men in regards to flirtation on the job.

Research Methods

During a three-week period in the fall of 2014, 141 employed Black men answered a survey regarding flirtation and office politics. The sample was qualified by SurveyMonkey™, which hosts over 3.5 million anonymous participants in its database which are frequently accessed by scholars for primary research. Further, the rationale for only including Black men is to create a voice from Black men about Black men relating to power structures, nuances and behavioral motivations at work.

The ten-question instrument provided data for descriptive statistics. Questions asked about motivation, frequency and results of flirtation on the current job. The second five questions asked about use of flirtation and other strategies to advance in the career overall.

Delimitations

Researchers can control for some elements of a research design, choosing elements for the process. This study was limited to American men, who were employed full time, and with any educational level. Female respondents were purposely excluded from the study (Creswell, 2013).

Limitations

The population was limited to those in the SurveyMonkey™ database of 3.5 million people. The sample then emerged from participants who needed a computer to access the survey. Participation was limited to those anonymously solicited for participation by SurveyMonkey™. In turn, the general population of people who use SurveyMonkey™ typically have some interest in data use or data collection. The population may be associated with education, engaged in marketing research, or another job that requires data collection. In short, while a population emerging from the SurveyMonkey™ database may appear totally random, anyone in the population has typically self-selected into the database for some data collection activity.

This data collection procedure also eliminates the ability to collect descriptions of participants. Survey based research often minimizes the ability to gather in-depth information on participants' backgrounds or motivations, beyond the demographic data collected to qualify for this study. Such rich description typically accompanies qualitative research (Creswell, 2013).

Internal and External Validity

The researcher who has a background instrument development created the ten question survey for this study. Such surveys have been previously created to yield sound data collection with human subjects. Once the instrument was developed, three employed Black males, ranging in ages 39–58 beta-tested the instrument. Their employment included a psychologist, a juvenile justice counselor, and a city employee serving as a youth mentor. All three Black men, who beta-tested the instrument, had been gainfully employed over five years.

In regard to internal validity, participants who were randomly selected

received benefits from SurveyMonkey™ to complete the survey. The standard benefit in the SurveyMonkey platform is fifty cents per completed survey which is then donated to a charity. In regard to external validity, the study design did not include a pre and post test, nor an extensive time lapse in which survey was conducted. Further, the data collection only included Black men eliminating the possibility that other demographics' perceptions on this topic would affect the data collection. Such procedures helped to control for internal threats to validity (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis

The following is a step-by-step procedure for the data analysis. The central research question and first two sub-questions were addressed by analyzing the descriptive statistics and open-ended questions. The third sub-question required a contingency table to examine the frequency of flirtation in relationship to men being in power and women being in power. The discrepancy in the contingency table led to a Chi Square test to investigate if there is a statistical significance related prevalence of flirtation related to the gender of who is in power.

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

The researcher compiled the descriptive states on the demographics and frequency of responses under each of the ten questions. The data regarding the frequency of flirtation, the impact of flirtation and strategies to advance in career were reported in tables. The researcher compiled responses by highlighting key words in the open-ended question regarding the motivation for flirtation.

Contingency Table and Chi Square

The frequency of responses by women and power and men in power were compiled. Under each column is the response to flirting 10% of the time, 30% of the time, 50% of the time, 80% of the time or not at all. By looking at the proportion of responses in the contingency table, the researcher then considered any possible discrepancy. If there is no difference in proportion, regardless if men are in power or women are in power, the rationale for additional for statistical testing would not exist. However, the frequencies of flirtation at the 30% level, 80% and "not at all" warranted further investigation with a Chi Square test to examine if the null hypothesis should be rejected.

Findings

A majority of the Black men completing the survey were ages 30–44 (48%); another 34% of the respondents were ages 45–60. The median income of the sample, 50% of respondents, earned between \$50,000 and \$99,000. Forty-four percent reported they had “some college,” while 27% held a college degree and another 19% held a graduate degree. The national sample had the highest concentration of respondents from the southern Atlantic states (29%) and another 15% from the Middle Atlantic States. Given the nature of the data collection via survey method, no other information or descriptions are available about respondents’ work experiences. See Tables 2 through 5 for demographics.

Sexual flirtation is used to a minor degree by Black men in the office to advance. The findings reveal that 30% of the sample of Black men perceive that sexual flirtation is used to advance one’s career (*n* = 42). This finding aligns with previous studies (Cleveland and Kerst, 1993; Bradley et al 2005; Kray and Locke, 2008) that confirm that women use flirtation for career advancement. Specifically 11% use flirtation to manipulate a female boss.

Addressing a central research question about Black men use of flirta-

Table 2. Age of participant



Table 3. Salary of participant

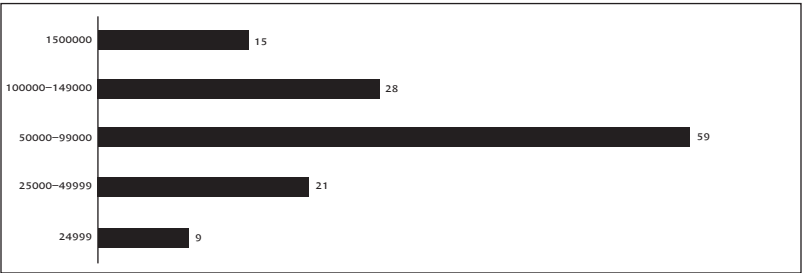


Table 4. Educational level of participant

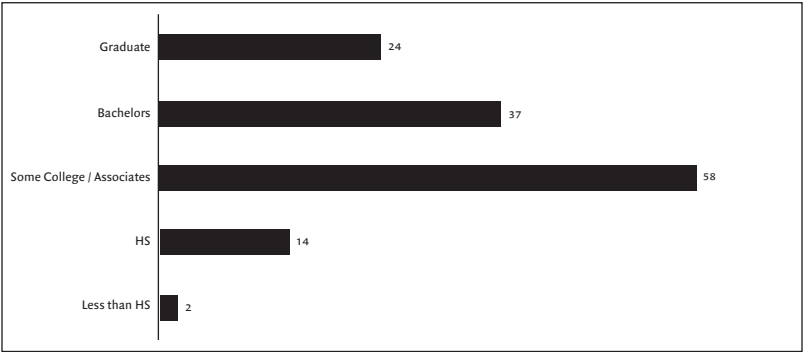
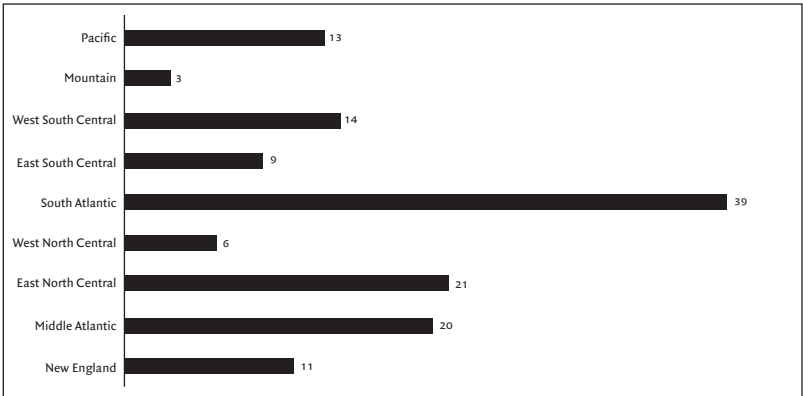


Table 5. Location of participant



tion to suppress and bully others, the question was asked, “In your current job, do Black men use flirtation to create a hostile work environment?” The respondents stated the flirtation doesn’t contribute to poor working conditions (83.94%). However a small percentage, 8.76% stated Black men flirting does contribute to a hostile work environment 10 % of the time. This finding extends the literature about flirtation in the office and its association with sexual harassment (Galen, 1991; Sendoff, 1992; and Fayankinnu 2012). See table 6.

In addressing one major research question “What is impact of Black men flirting on the job?” the survey offered the question: “If Black men use flirtation in the office, does it lead to other inappropriate actions?” Twenty-

Table 6. In your current job, do Black men use flirtation to create a hostile work environment?

8.76%	10% of the time
2.92%	30% of the time
3.65%	50% of the time
.73%	80% of the time
83.94%	Not at all

five percent reported that during their career sexual flirtation led to sexual relationships, 19% reported that sexual flirtation lead to sexual harassment charges, 15% reported that sexual flirtation lead to inaccurate work performance of people manipulated. These findings regarding a hostile work environment are similar to other studies in which flirtation on some level can affect the work environment (Galen, 1991; Sendoff, 1992; Fayankinnu 2012). See Table 7.

Table 7. If Black men use flirtation in the office, does it lead to other inappropriate actions?

58%	In my experience Black men don't flirt
25%	Sexual relationships with staff
19%	Sexual harassment charges
15%	In accurate work performance of person manipulated

In regard to organizational responses, 25% of participants reported that the organization fired the man flirting and 16% reported that the flirting man was transferred. See Table 8.

When asked about strategies used to advance career, Black men also

Table 8. If Black men use flirtation to manipulate leadership or create a hostile environment, what happened to solve the problem?

54%	In my experience Black men don't flirt
25%	Fire man who is flirting
16%	Transfer man who is flirting

reported that more education than the competition was key (70%), working twice as hard (54%) and self-isolation strategies, or staying away from office politics (31%) were critical. Fifty-two percent reported that creating their own business was a viable option. See Table 9.

Table 9. Question: In your experience, what do Black men need to do to advance in career (may choose three options)?

70%	Have more education
54%	Work twice as hard
52%	Create own business
31%	Stay away from office politics
12%	Be submissive to leadership
9%	Be physically attractive
8%	Strategic with other Black men
8%	Be married in a stable relationship

The majority of the Black men reported flirting was not part of their career experience. Sixty-nine percent reported they had not witnessed Black men flirting to gain benefits or resources; 83% stated they had not witnessed Black men flirting to manipulate a boss, and 53% stated that they had not witnessed Black flirting throughout their careers.

Of the 141 participants, 117 offered open-ended comments to the question, “If you flirt what you hope to achieve . . .” This question further explored assertions from previous studies that flirtation, while ambiguous is not happenstance (Henningsen et al., 2008; Lim and Howard, 1998; Pryor, Lavite and Stoller, 1993). Seventeen Black men said they were personally motivated to have sex with the target; twenty-two stated they flirted to create a happy environment or ease tension in good fun. Thirty-one commented that they don’t flirt at all. Table 10 provides a sample of other open-ended comments related to the motivation to flirt on the job.

Table 10. Question: “If you flirt what do you hope to achieve . . .”

Respondent #1	Head game
Respondent #2	“In my experience, Black men shouldn’t flirt because they need to focus on their jobs in the first place . . .”
Respondent #3	“I find the flirting with colleagues at work is weird and awkward.
Respondent #4	“Don’t do it, I think this sends the wrong message, like you are trying to get something without putting in the effort”
Respondent #5	“I don’t flirt at work, it’s not professional.”
Respondent #6	“But I’m usually trying to manipulate the person I am flirting with in some way . . .”
Respondent #7	Getting a little sum after work is done . . .

Contingency Table

One of the sub-questions focused on the gender of leadership as a possible variable is allowing flirtation by Black men in the office. The hypothesis related to this question is:

H₁. There is a relationship between gender of the person in power and use of flirtation.

H₀. There is no relationship between gender of the person in power and use of flirtation.

The following contingency table outlines the frequency of responses related to each variable (see Table 11).

Table 11. Flirtation proportions related to men/women in power

Use Flirtation	Men in Power	Women in Power	
10% of the time	15.00%	14.63%	14.89%
30% of the time	6.00%	12.20%	7.80%
50% of the time	4.00%	4.88%	4.26%
80% of the time	2.00%	4.88%	2.84%
not at all	73.00%	63.41%	70.21%

The contingency table (Table 11) shows a discrepancy in frequency of flirtation in relation to women being in power and men being in power. If the null hypothesis were true

“H₀ There is no relationship between women being in power and use of flirtation,” then the discrepancies highlighted in Table 10 at the 30% level, the 80% level and the “not at all level” would not exist; there would be no notable difference in the cell proportions and the marginal proportions. This discrepancy in observed proportions warrants the Chi Square test to determine if the null hypothesis should be rejected. To qualify for the Chi Square test, the variables of the study “women in power” or “men in power and at least five participants answered each question. Men in power were coded as “0” and women in power were coded as “1.” In regard to frequency, Not at all = “0,” 10% flirtation = “1,” 30% flirtation = “2,” 50% flirtation = “3,” and 80% flirtation = “4.” The IBM SPSS Statistical Package was used to calculate the Chi square frequency of expected versus observed. See Table 12 and Table 13:

Table 12. Cross tabulation regarding gender in power

			GenderW		Total
			Man	Woman	
Frequency	N/A = .00	Count	73	26	99
		*Expected Count	70.2	28.8	99.0
10% = 1		Count	15	6	21
		Expected	14.9	6.1	21.0
		Count			
30% = 2		Count	6	5	11
		*Expected Count	7.8	3.2	11.0
50% = 3		Count	4	2	6
		Expected	4.3	1.7	6.0
		Count			
80% = 4		Count	2	2	4
		*Expected Count	2.8	1.2	4.0
Total		Count	100	41	141
		Expected	100.0	41.0	141.0
		Count			

Table 13. Chi-square tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.715 ^a	4	.607
n of Valid Cases	141		

^a5 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.16.

While the Chi Square reveals some association between women being in power and more flirtation, the test for this sample doesn’t yield statistically significant results at the .05 level (P-value of .607). With $n = 141$, a future study would need a larger sample to further investigate the possibility of a statistically significant relationship between Black men using flirtation to advance and women being in power at the office.

Discussion on Findings

The study revealed that 30% ($n = 42$) of the sample has witnessed or engaged in sexual flirtation at some time in the career to advance. While the majority of the sample shunned flirtation, some Black men site using flirtation to manipulate staff, create a fun office environment or pursue sex with an office colleague as motivation. While a minority of the sample saw sexual flirtation as a tool for career advancement, even less saw strategizing with other Black men as a career strategy ($n = 11$). Strategizing with other Black men received slightly less consideration as a career strategy than being physically attractive ($n = 12$). Further, while flirtation was adopted by a small portion of the sample, respondents (83.94%) reported that Black men’s use of flirtation did not create a hostile work environment.

In a highly sexualized American culture which also historical denies access to Black men socially and economically, a reasonable conclusion might lead one to believe that even sexual flirtation can be part of the “any means necessary” that Black men might use of advance. Further, while these findings also confirm the presence and motivation of flirtation, they do not reveal flirtation as a significant workplace strategy used by Black men. Though the dominant culture might still pursue Black sex in media and sports, Black men do not typically employ this potential power in the workplace.

The contingency table and corresponding distributions reveal a loose association with sexual flirtation and women in power. The data only reveals a discrepancy based on which gender is in power. However, the data does not yield a statistically significant result.

Age or educational level was not a compelling variable in determining who flirted in the office. In short, while popular culture still objectified the Black women a majority of Black men do not use that taboo sexual power in the professional office space. A majority of the respondents struggle within the United States “birth defect” where Blacks feel second class, inferior, and subject to the whim of the dominant culture. Consequently, respondents perceived that having more education ($n = 94$) and solid work ethic to be twice as good ($n = 72$) were the viable approaches to transcending the triple threat on Black men, murder, unemployment and lacking education.

In converse, the literature chronicles that sexual flirtation can be a power play, members of this study have confirmed that sexual flirtation is even at minor level, a tool used to advance careers or manipulate the work environment (Frisby 2011, Bradley 2005 Kray, 2008, Henningsen, Braz, and Davies, 2008). The open-ended comments offer a stratum of experiences of respondents who will consider flirtation, or shun the practice altogether. Fifteen of the respondents made over \$150,000 and presumably held leadership positions as evidenced by the comment “In my position, it would be highly inappropriate to flirt.”

Nonetheless, as with the general population, flirtation is used by some participants to achieve a goal, even at the risk of a sexual harassment charge. This finding is consistent with previous studies which stated flirtation is motivation laden. While a majority of participants shunned flirtation as career strategy, some participants in the study were seeking sex when flirting; yet for the few who used it, flirtation remained a tool to gain favorable attention or likability.

Recommendations for Future Study

The findings reveal that education and hard work are predominantly the compelling strategies while networking between Black men as a strategy often overlooked. The “birth defect” referenced by Condelezza Rice has subjugated Blacks in all levels of society and formed the basis for race discrimination since this country’s inception. Hence, the participants reporting a need to have more education or a perception to work twice as hard as the competition is consistent with the feeling of being treated or viewed as inferior within the dominant culture. The finding that Black men don’t network with each other also may relate to the “birth defect.” As members of the American society, Black men receive the same messages that Blacks

are lazy, substandard yet oversexed; therefore this premise can potentially dissuade Blacks from partnering with each other.

The contingency tables and Chi Square test examine the discrepancy in flirtation as a tool for Black men depending on the gender of leadership. The sample of $n = 141$ is small and expected counts in half of the cells is below suggested values for a proper test. Recommendation for further study would be to examine gender, leadership and sexual flirtation with a larger sample.

Education may be an equalizer in the color struck American society. However, the aforementioned statistics show that Black men are less likely to graduate from college. Given the rising cost of education, alternative credential opportunities through certificate and community colleges can be a pathway for Black men to access educational opportunities.

Enhanced education and working twice as hard, then flirtation to a lesser degree emerged from findings as viable options, while mentorship between Black men is an untapped resource. Over half of this random sample had a college degree or higher and over 70% made over \$50,000. Close to 44% were over the age of 45. However, only 11% saw working with other Black men as a way to advance a career. A few studies offer insight for intra-racial mentoring between Black men and white counterparts (Wingfield, 2014, Reddick, 2012), yet the possibility of Black men mentoring each other deserves further investigation.

While a pretty face and toothy smile make anyone swoon, sexual approaches while utilized by the sample were not the predominant strategies for success. In the fractured experiences of Black men, life doesn't appear to imitate art and entertainment. However, though a minority of Black men will use flirtation to advance, even fewer will use collaboration and solidarity amongst themselves to craft a new and productive experience in the workplace.

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