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# The Marginalization of Black Executives

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## Abstract

Employment barriers appear to have lifted to allow greater numbers of educated blacks to move into high-paying professional and managerial occupations. But are the numerical gains by blacks really indicative of equal participation in the labor market? To address this question, I analyze

interviews on the careers of 76 of the top-ranking black executives employed in Chicago white-owned corporations. My findings indicate that blacks have succeeded within white management hierarchies, but their upward mobility has been delineated racially. Respondents differentially filled personnel and public relations jobs explicitly created during the 1960s and 1970s to respond to black demands for civil rights. I conclude that this base of achievement built obsolete features into the current positions blacks hold in management. The corporate response to civil rights protest created a highly visible but economically vulnerable black managerial elite.

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