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Navigating Early Career Management: Workplace Experiences and Career Impact

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Keywords: *managers; early-career; career progression; gender.*

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Navigating Early Career Management: Workplace Experiences and Career Impact

Naviguer Dans La Gestion Du Début De Carrière: Expériences Sur Le Lieu De Travail Et Impact Sur La Carrière

Émilie Giguère [α], Mariève Pelletier [σ], Jade Avoine [ρ], Geneviève Girard [ω] & Mireille Sirois Gagné [¥]

Abstract- This article explores the workplace experiences of young professionals during their early integration into management roles and their implications for career development. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study conducted one-on-one interviews with 61 participants. The findings reveal a diverse range of workplace experiences that can either facilitate or complicate the integration process. Notably, the study sheds light on the persistence of gender-related issues in these early career stages. The research offers practical insights for organizations and guidance counselors and underscores the need for further exploration in this field.

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Résumé- Cet article explore les expériences professionnelles des jeunes professionnels au cours de leur intégration précoce dans des rôles de direction et leurs implications pour le développement de carrière. Utilisant une approche de recherche qualitative, l'étude a mené des entretiens individuels avec 61 participants. Les résultats révèlent une diversité d'expériences de travail qui peuvent faciliter ou compliquer le processus d'intégration. L'étude met notamment en lumière la persistance des problèmes liés au genre à ces premiers stades de carrière. La recherche offre des informations pratiques aux organisations et aux conseillers d'orientation et souligne la nécessité d'une exploration plus approfondie dans ce domaine.

Mots-Clés: cadres; débuts de carrière; progression de carrière; genre.

I. Introduction

In recent years, the issue of career development for managers has attracted the interest of a good number of researchers and professionals (Adamson et al., 2022; Bishu et al., 2022; Thaller et al., 2023). In this field, studies on careers in management conducted with cohorts of women reveal the persistence of ethnic (Alesia, 2017)or gendered (Alesia, 2017; Bates & Holt, 2021; Ekonen & Heilmann, 2021; Ezzedeen et al., 2015; Vaz et al., 2023) prejudices and stereotyping, as well as microaggressions (mansplaining, manterrupting) (Vaz et al., 2023) that hold women back from management positions. Similarly, corporate culture in the form of working long hours or lack of authority in relation to supervised staff also continue to hinder women's careers (Lama, 2015). Crowning these struggles is the demanding responsibility for household chores, and the complex burden of reconciling the latter with professional duties, which compel women in management positions to muster different strategies to strike a certain balance (Bates & Holt, 2021; Bishu et al., 2022; Ezzedeen et al., 2015; Giguère et al., 2023; Michaelides et al., 2023; Shaw & Leberman, 2015).Moreover, a small number of studies on women managers have evidenced the deep-seated role of social gender relations from the very beginning of their post-secondary training and socio-professional integration (Giguère et al., 2020). Conversely, other research focused on women reveals the importance of training (Sexton et al., 2014), networking (Ekonen & Heilmann, 2021) and the support of a superior or access to a mentor, all of which can be levers for women's careers(Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010; Bishu et al., 2022; Guptill et al., 2018; Michaelides et al., 2023; Sexton et al., 2014).

Studies carried out with mixed cohorts of men and women show that professional work experience, high career mobility and leveraging networks are key career accelerators (Thaller et al., 2023). They also expose gender-related issues in the area of work-life balance, in particular the more complex and tenuous high-wire act mothers at a higher risk of imbalance must perform, fueling frustration and anxiety (Adamson et al., 2022). For male managers, the need to reconcile managerial work and family life is less pronounced, suggesting a disproportionate share of housework falls on their spouses (Adamson et al., 2022). Despite significant advances in understanding professional career development issues facing both men and women, few of these studies can be used to identify and examine the experiences of young managers as they enter the work place in their early days of their professional careers.

The aim of this article is to identify and examine these early-career workplace experiences and their possible impacts on career progression, using a theoretical framework that combines a life course approach (Fournier et al., 2016) and living work theory (Dejours, 2009; Molinier, 2008). First, however, we will provide a context for our study with an overview of

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recent scholarship on the characteristics of managerial work in the rapidly transforming workplace.

II. Characteristics of Managerial Work in a Context of Workplace Transformation

Since the turn of the millennium, major transformational change has swept through the workplace and dramatically redefined both work and the ability of managers to assume their roles and remain employed. Well before COVID-19, studies had shown that managerial work was heavily affected by constant organizational restructuring, a manifest tendency to rationalize the workforce and often incredibly unrealistic and short-term performance target plans (Foster et al., 2019; Harris & Ogbonna, 2020; Hassard et al., 2012; Mercure, 2018; Trudel & Gosselin, 2010; Worrall & Cooper, 2014). Some studies have highlighted the downside of this new work, including the rise to dominance of the shareholder-focused market and intensive and short-term capital appreciation (Bal & Dóci, 2018; Deakin & Wilkinson, 2011; Hassard et al., 2012; Kochan et al., 2019), intensified competition in the global market (Farrell & Morris, 2013; Harris & Ogbonna, 2020; Kochan et al., 2019; Ross et al., 2017; Worrall & Cooper, 2014), and the varied models of agility aimed at minimizing production costs and maximizing organizational efficiency (Durand, 2018; Farrell & Morris, 2013; Kochan et al., 2019; Taskin et al., 2017; Yadav et al., 2017). Others have pointed to the shift towards a management system increasingly focused on corporate performance, profitability and productivity (Alvesson et al., 2017; Bal & Dóci, 2018; Taskin et al., 2017; Yadav et al., 2017), and escalating demands from shareholders and customers(Foster et al., 2019; Trudel & Gosselin, 2010). These changes are also reflected in an economy increasingly based on further enhancing services and new forms of customer-driven pressures (du Tertre, 2013; Durand, 2018; Mercure, 2017). Managers now see their performance revolve around financial targets as the sole organizing dimension of their work, yet their duties involve many other aspects that shape their workplace experiences (de Gaulejac & Hanique, 2019; Dujarier, 2015). This transformative change in the organization of work is spurred by a discernible individualistic culture based on achieving targets and incentive compensation systems (e.g., salary increases, bonuses)(Foster et al., 2019). All these organizational pressures can present managers with a decline in working conditions, an increase in workload and a decrease in autonomous decision-making (Hamouche, 2019; St-Hilaire & Gilbert, 2019). Studies show, in fact, that managerial work is burdened by a prolife ration of demands and performance objectives (Cousin & Mispelblom Beyer, 2011; Farrell & Morris, 2013; Fortier, 2018; Harris & Ogbonna, 2020; Worrall & Cooper, 2014)¸ a lack of resources (e.g., time, financial) to develop service activities and manage direct reports (Cregård & Corin, 2019; Mhiri & Teneau, 2015), work overload due to added administrative tasks (Cregård & Corin, 2019; Créno & Cahour, 2016; Mhiri & Teneau, 2015; Pelletier, 2014), and more fragmented, sporadic work activities (Alvesson et al., 2017; Bobillier Chaumon et al., 2018). In some cases, managers are boxed in, confronted by the conflicting demands and complex workplace experiences at the heart of ethical dilemmas, and find themselves increasingly on their own as a result of competitive relationships that lead to individualization and a weakened sense of identity(Alvesson et al., 2017; Giguère et al., 2020; Cousin & Mispelblom Beyer, 2011; Pelletier, 2014). As their professional responsibilities ramp up, this new world of work pushes managers to commit to longer working hours (Farrell & Morris, 2013; Glée-Vermande & Beyer, 2012; Harris & Ogbonna, 2020; Pelletier, 2014) and poses health risks, in particular burnout (Eurofound, 2019; Worrall & Cooper, 2014). All these findings raise major concerns about integrating and retaining managers- specifically young professionals in the early stages of their careers- against this evolving landscape of transformation. In this respect, some researchers have pointed out these changes also have an impact on the workplace integration process, particularly for younger generations, whose career progressions tend to be more fluid, unstable, irregular and uncertain (Danvers, 2018; Guichard, 2018; Vultur & Bernier, 2014). Yet this sub-group of young professionals remains an under-researched population, both in studies on managerial work (Barley & Kunda, 2001; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020; Korica et al., 2017), organizational changes and the shifting roles of managers (Farrell & Morris, 2013; Hassard et al., 2012; Worrall & Cooper, 2014), and the impacts these changes have on the limitations and uncertainties of career development (Farrell & Morris, 2013; Hassard et al., 2012). It would thus warrant to examine the workplace experiences of young managers as they step into professional roles and the effects of these changes on their careers. The next section introduces our theoretical framework, which combines a life course approach (Fournier et al., 2016)with living work theory (Dejours, 2009; Molinier, 2008).

III. Theoretical Framework

a) *Life Course Approach*

Used in the field of guidance counselling to analyze career paths, a life course approach (Fournier et al., 2016) considers several elements: labour market transformations and their impact on life courses (Kohli, 2009), constructivist and systems theories of career development (Patton & McMahon, 2014; Savickas et al., 2009; Young & Valach, 2008) and sociology research on life courses (Elder, 2009; Lalive d'Epinay et al., 2005).

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We chose this theoretical approach specifically to identify the temporality of professional integration for young managers, particularly their experiences as they begin their management role and navigate the ecosystem of a new workplace (Fuchs, 2011). The concept of experience, on the other hand, considers dimensions relating to the way in which individuals live through different events contextualized over the course of their lives (Craig, 2008) and the content of the experience lived as inseparable from the effects it engenders (Jodelet, 2006).

b) Living Work Theory

Living work theory provides a particularly inventive and relevant theoretical perspective for understanding the human side of work, namely through the lens of the employee's workplace experiences, including visible and invisible dimensions of work (Dejours, 2009, 2018; Giguère et al., 2022; Molinier, 2004; St-Arnaud & Giguère, 2018).The living aspect of work refers to the notion that as the employee changes their work, they are changed in turn. This theory makes it possible to interpret the gap between objectives set by the organization of the work (*prescribed work*) and what needs to be done to achieve them (*actual work*) (Dejours 2009). It also allows to grasp, using the employee's lived workplace experiences, the invisible part of work and what this involves on the subjective level, namely the way people mobilize their actions, skills and ability to feel, think and interpret. Also considered in this theory are dynamics underpinning employee relationships and cooperation, power relations in and through work, and new forms of work organization (Dejours, 2009; Dejours et al., 2018). In this regard, living work theory can examine persistent gender issues in men's and women's relationship to work (Galerand & Kergoat, 2017; Hirata & Kergoat, 2017). Also crucially important in this theoretical perspective are the individual's own words, the rebuilding of meaning they attribute to their experience as well as an examination of the subjective and inter subjective dynamics experienced (Dejours, 2009). Overall, our analytical framework of a life course approach combined with living work theory makes it possible to capture the workplace experiences of young managers as they integrate into their professional roles.

IV. Methodology

To identify and examine the workplace experiences of young managers as they integrate professionally and how this impacts their career progression, a qualitative study design using narrative inquiry (Lieblich et al., 1998) was employed. Narrative inquiry is an effective strategy for researchers to get participants to reveal through rich stories the meaning they give to events they have experienced (Bujold, 2004).

An interview guide was created to outline and inquire about various themes, including career paths, managerial experiences and links between work and life-planning, without resorting to formulating specific questions. Lasting about 90 minutes each, one-on-one interviews began with a broad opening question to help participants ease into the interview themes (e.g., career paths, workplace experiences, balancing different spheres of life). These interviews were carried out in stages so that materials could be analyzed throughout the collection process in an iterative loop between fieldwork and theory (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016). This process made it possible to analyze the new material as it was produced, in particular to clarify certain aspects that would help direct subsequent interviews and open up new questions (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016).

a) Recruitment

To ensure diverse participation in our study, the strategy used was to contact different organizations and relevant players in the field of early-career managers. The methodological principles of data saturation and diversification were employed in order to create a homogenous sample for individual interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Saturation allowed to delve deeper into the research subject and consider criteria comparable to all participants. These criteria were: 1) holding a managerial position in the service sector and 2) having been in a managerial position for at least 2 years but no more than 10. Diversification fine-tuned the "internal diversity" of the sample based on a range of criteria to maximize the intensive study of the research subject within the group of female participants. These criteria included gender, hierarchical level, initial training, conjugal status and family situation. In all, 61 participants- 37 women and 24 men- took part in the one-on-one interviews.

b) Processing and Analysis

Inspired by Paillé and Mucchielli (2016),a phenomenological examination of the materials collected was carried out by attentively listening to the interviews and carefully reading and rereading the interview transcripts. Concurrently with this material immersion, analytical work using conceptualizing categories (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016; St-Arnaud & Giguère, 2018) was undertaken to better abstract the workplace experiences of young managers during their professional integration. The conceptualization of categories allowed to gradually classify phenomena directly from the interviews, by comparing them with each other, as well as carrying out iterative step-by-step "theoretical constructions" (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2016). More specifically, categories were created dynamically through analytical description, interpretative deduction and inductive theorizing (see Annex 2 of St-Arnaud & Giguère, 2018; Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016). The notable contribution of the present study lies in this iterative

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process between the knowledge produced in the field of young managers' career development, the results and its theoretical framework. The processing and analysis of the interview materials allowed for a more granular understanding of workplace experiences during professional integration, and possible impacts on career progression.

V. Results

The processing and analysis of the interview materials provided the data to group the varied workplace experiences of early-career managers into two broad categories: workplace experiences that facilitate integration and workplace experiences that complicate it. These will be discussed at length in this section.

a) Workplace Experiences that Facilitate Integration

Some participants in our study recounted workplace experiences that facilitated their professional integration into management roles. The sub-categories that follow illustrate experiences that made the integration process easier.

i. Support from a Superior or External Professional

A number of participants said they had received support from their superior or an external professional (e.g., a certified coach) in discussing aspects of managerial work they had questions about (such as the technical or relational side of management) or more specific workplace experiences. For example, they had been able to discuss with their superior how to objectively delegate an onerous task between two teams, run questions by them or get support in tricky work situations through more horizontal communication. These influential individuals may also have acted as mentors, sharing observations about strengths and areas for improvement in their mentees' managerial work, or they may have promoted and championed the latter's career advancement, for example, through helping them land a promotion:

> *Actually, me, it was the General Manager who knew me, he'd known me from a previous job because we'd worked together at X [mentions name of a public service organization]. He knew I was on the list; he knew I'd be interested and so, he was looking for an X [mentions mid-level management position] and he approached me: "Are you interested?" So that's when I was able to apply. So, this also gave me the chance to find out that this job existed. So honestly it was thanks to that connection that I was able to apply and be chosen.- Émile*

> *So I had this mentor, and I'd asked my assistant director to give me her feedback—sometimes in some situations, to improve myself as a person, of course. Everything was all new to me. Although it worked out very well in the end, for sure there are moments when you question yourself and then think: "Oh, what did I get myself into? That's a big challenge!" [...] I've also been lucky to have FIRST-RATE managers. So, my bosses have been there for me through it all.– Gisèle*

The possibility of building a trusted relationship with a superior or mentor may have also brought them a degree of autonomy and freedom to organize their managerial work—for example, in setting up their work teams or leading a project, as in Zora's case:

> *I've been here at X [mentions name of the organization] now for X [mentions number of months, less than one year] [...] I'm given a lot of freedom; they trust me. Even though I've been here less than a year, I've built my team […]people I already knew, but they had confidence in me to integrate them into the team, so this let us make much more progress on the implementation of lots and lots of projects and lots and lots of priorities.– Zora*

ii. Taking Part in Training and Support Activities

Being encouraged to take part in training or support activities (e.g., corporate training programs) helped many to acquire a number of tools, reflect on managerial work, and become more familiar with resources that would facilitate the process of easing into their management roles. They said these activities made it easier for them to prepare for their integration:

> *At X [mentions name of the organisation], though, there is a very interesting program called X [mentions name of program]. It's a very interesting program, actually, it gives us with tools, a refresher course and a guide that shows what to expect during the first 100 days on the job. After that I did some reading and took it very seriously. Indeed, those first 100 days are all about getting ready for the job. – Gisèle*

> *In fact, there is something called X [mentions name of the leadership training program and provides a few details about it]. The way it works is that you have to be recommended by your superior, and they receive dozens, if not hundreds, of applications every year. You go through an interview, and some are chosen [mentions number, fewer than 50], and so I was chosen out of the X group [mentions name of his group]. We started a little over [mentions how long, less than 2 years], so it's—it's a bit, and I don't like to boast, but it's—it's intended for managers who have a high potential for advancement and development. So, I'm in it too, and it's really very, very helpful and instructive. It's—it's a great program.– Emerick*

iii. Having held One or more Positions in the Organization

Holding one or more positions in their organization before moving into a management role gave some managers a head start in becoming familiar with the environment as a whole- work culture and organization, staff, ways of operating, where to find

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support- which may have made it easier for them to integrate and be offered a promotion once they graduated:

I worked part-time in a retail business [...] That's when I got the bug, and that's what made me switch programs instead of finishing my pre-university CEGEP program X [mentions name of her program]. I decided to do X [names her college program, in management] instead [...] When I graduated, well, I had been working part-time in a retail business, and my X [names her boss] he gave me a lot of duties. He gave me lots of responsibilities [...] When I finished my X [mentions name of her college program], I transferred to a new store. [...] I landed X [names her supervisor job] over there. - Marlène

I work for the family business, and so I was kind of destined to move up the ladder eventually. So, when I finished my university, I fully joined the company as X [mentions professional position in sales and service].- Adrien

In short, the processing and analysis of the interview materials revealed that having support from a superior or an external professional, taking part in training or support activities, or having held one or more positions in the organization can help young men and women ease into management positions. These findings are largely in line with other studies on women in management that have highlighted the importance of career development training(Sexton et al., 2014), the support of a superior or access to a mentor as career levers (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010; Bishu et al., 2022; Guptill et al., 2018; Michaelides et al., 2023; Sexton et al., 2014). In fact, it is reasonableto conclude that being able to share one's workplace experiences and supportive relational dynamics (Dejours, 2009)- particularly through training activities or one-on-one support from a superior or an external professional- from the moment they enter theirrole empowersboth young men and womento hone their professional skills and further their careers. Thesefindings also show that having held one or more positions in the organization can beafacilitating factor in the integration of young managers, particularly since they have a head start in terms of their knowledge of the staff and practices in the organization. This also echoesmixed-cohort studies by Thaller et al. (2023), that show the most important levers for career progression are professional work experience, highmobility and networking. Simply put, having held several positions in the organization, the support of a mentor or superior and developing their network can helpyoung men and women integrate professionally into management.

b) Workplace Experiences that Complicate Integration

On the other side, some participants related workplace experiences that complicated their integration into professional roles. The sub-categories that follow illustrate some of these complex experiences.

i. *Mismatches Between Accumulated Knowledge and the Demands of Management Work*

The mismatch between knowledge accumulated from previous training and job experiences and the demands of managerial work- such as being able to square the different facets of material, financial and human resources- left some participants feeling that something was lacking:

So, I was apprenticing a lot. And like it or not, there's no written manual on how to become a manager, there's no particular formula that can help us become managers. Sure, they have training courses at X [mentions name of the educational institution] to train people, just to go and find training, but the human relations aspect of it, anything that has to do with dealing with people, I think that... it's something we either have or don't; it's not necessarily something that can taught. - Mathias

This mismatch was also noted when integrating into a new position during a labour shortage, as it was often done swiftly without first having all the necessary resources and support, as Fanny attests:

We're in an age where I find we're losing a lot of expertise. Boomers will be leaving in droves, and we're holding down jobs that come with additional responsibilities much sooner. Then you're short of people. So, I've taken on this X [mentions her specialist role] with more responsibilities much sooner. But I find that to do this job, you're not always well supported or supervised, and learn a bit on the fly, and this might not be the best way.- Fanny

In some cases, immigration may also have played a role in amplifying this mismatch during integration, given that for some managers, previous work experience and qualifications carried little or no recognition in accessing management positions with responsibilities comparable to those in previous jobs:

When I was looking for work, I had a hard time as an immigrant finding a job that matched my previous experience and my qualifications. So I worked a lot in the cultural and community sectors, as well as in outdoor recreation. They were mostly X [mentions a middle management position]. I did have a certain level of responsibility, though, but they weren't very well-paying jobs. On the other hand, it helped build a resume of work experience in Canada, and I think that led to the next step. – Sylvain

Added to all of this, not knowing colleagues or superiors well, having little opportunity to talk with them, or lacking feedback, particularly when joining a new workplace, can certainly complicate integration. More broadly, some participants noted they had encountered challenging organizational situations and complex

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workplace experiences during their integration, for example, in a team where there was a staff shortage or following the dismissal of their predecessor:

They don't tell you that when you arrive. The X [mentions middle management position] before you, well, he had resigned and then he wouldn't take care of it. Then, well they tell you "Go ahead, you can do it. "But they don't give you the means, don't give you too much background information, and don't prepare you, don't support you. - Patricia

For some managers, mismatches between their past experiences and first forays into management work occurred in the area of implementing their management practices. They mentioned having to adapt their practices to the diversity of people they supervised (e.g., youth or adults of all ages, experienced staff, new hires, neuroatypical people) to make their job run more smoothly, as in Marlène's case:

I've worked with, like, many generations, young people and ladies who've been with the company for 40 years. I had to adapt my management style somewhat with them, in working with them. -Marlène

In other cases, some confided that they had to adapt their management practices when they became superiors to former peers. Moving into an authority role over people with whom they had developed close and sometimes friendly relationships could at times inject sensitive or even awkward dynamics into their interactions with the teams they led, and this fed their feeling of isolation. Others explained that they had to assert themselves or justify their decisions to more experienced employees on their teams, as Camille had to do:

Then I hired someone who was older than me. She had a X [mentions graduate degree]. I just had a X [mentions undergraduate degree]. Well, this kept coming up all the time: "Yeah, but Camille, you know, with my experience, I'd do it like this." Well, yes. I understand. Good for you! But I'm the boss. So you know what? We're not going do it that way. I value what you're telling me, and I know that you're experienced and all that, but in the end, well, I'm the one in charge. It took me almost six months before I was really able to say: "Well, I'm the boss. And that's how it goes."- Camille

Lastly, other mismatches were noted in situations where managers had to make decisions on their own, in an organizational context without colleagues at the same managerial level with whom they could share and discuss what they were facing:

The thing is, what I also find hard about management is often being alone in that position. Sure, decisions are made at board meetings, but in day-to-day management I'm all by myself. I do have colleagues, but the moment I have a decision to make or something is bothering me, you know, I'm still largely on my own. - Justine

ii. *Environments where Work Organization Poses Health Risks*

A number of participants recounted having to integrate into workplace environments where staff were overworked, particularly due to lack of or inadequate resources, causing stress and burnout. Large volumes of work to be completed on tight deadlines was also brought up:

When I took up the job, I quickly realized that we were far from having the resources needed to carry out the mandates that were expected of us. So, the workload was really excessive compared to the resources we had. - Jonas

Some said that in these kinds of situations, to get the job done they had to put their shoulder to the wheel and extend their working day- either by starting early in the morning or staying late into the evening- or even work weekends. Others admitted that part of their concerns during their integration was thinking about their workloads and the boundaries they needed to set for the sake of their health. To preserve their well-being, some worked out compromises, such as agreeing to temporarily work longer hours while recruiting additional staff and better structuring tasks within the team. Others approached and struck agreements with their superiors to reset often unrealistic expectations and deadlines.

I met with the director general, who laid out his priorities, which were in a to-do-list. So here I am in the team, and see that I have X [names number of employees left, less than 5] left and about 8 vacancies. His expectations were completely unrealistic. Still, he was quite decent about it, but it's all because they set very high expectations. You're under pressure and you're like, "Okay! But you know I have to build a team from scratch. I'm not there yet." And on top of that you have customer requests coming in from everywhere. - Émile

iii. *Pressure to "Prove Oneself" in Complying with Group Norms*

Several participants spoke of feeling pressured to prove themselves as managers in order to conform to the group norms operating in their business. For example, some mentioned having been given a mandate to carve out a place for themselves within an existing team, which could be challenging, as Bianca attests:

My superior said, "Perfect. You want to start in this business? Make your mark, but you still have a month and a half to hire 100 employees in all departments combined." So this was very, very big and that was it. It was a team of managers who had been there for a while. I'd be lying if I told you that it was easy when I first got there, because, like it or not, I was new kid on

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the block with a huge mandate. So I had to quickly get all the department managers on board to target their needs, so that we could hire all these wonderful people within a month and a half. [Laughter] […] in the X culture [names healthcare institution], people are often close-minded, there's a bit of an old-fashioned management mentality. No sooner did I come in all bright and cheery with good ideas that I'd get comments like: "Hey, careful- you know, be careful how you want to handle this." - Bianca

Some managers talked about how the visibility of their management methods differed from those of their colleagues and how this may have complicated their professional integration. For example, Vicky explained that her colleagues criticized her for being too lax with her team, whereas stricter ones were the norm in the industry. In another example, involving promotions, some managers mentioned they had been denied promotion opportunities because they had not "done their time" nor "acquired enough experience to be ready," as is common practice in their industry, before moving from one position to another:

What was very difficult at the beginning was precisely to get other managers to believe in me. When I started, I had the big disadvantage of being young. I'd just joined the company and wanted a management position. In the company mindset, it's more like you can become a manager once you've been here long time. I firmly believe that being a manager is not about being at the top. I understand these are promotions, but you know for me it's not—it's not because you're good at your job that you must be a good manager. And I find that this is a big problem at the company where I'm currently working, because it means that skilled young people who want to be managers are held back a lot. They're often held back because they think: "No, you're not ready. You're too young" [...] nobody has ever been able to tell me why [laughs], they thought I wasn't ready. – Vicky

Strained relationships or conflict in the workplace that may lead to violence Some participants revealed that when entering their role they experienced certain work situations marked by strained relationships or conflicts with colleagues, superiors or supervised staff. These ranged from having to manage tensions or conflicts between staff or partners, repair team dynamics, handle crises, or work through issues with a superior:

Because when I got there, the boat was sinking [laughter][…] there were just three employees, including one part-time. So we needed to rebuild the team. It's a practically all new team. […] the former director who was there before, I think he had reached the end of what he could do for the regions, so there was like some sort of disagreement and the regions tried to split up, but of course if they do that and then create another organization, then there is no point for our organization to exist and they couldn't do that because of donor funding; they couldn't split up. So that really created a lot of conflict. Then there was what we insiders called a coup [laughs].In the sense that some of the people in fact stepped forward to join the board of directors. So there was a renewal of the board of directors. At that point, there was a change in methods, the previous director didn't like it and left. So that's it. He left. Some employees left because of him during the pandemic. That's why there weren't that many people left. So my job was to bring back all the regions, get everyone back to working together, rebuild the team and move forward with it. - Georgia

[...] recently, my superior and I were not seeing eye to eye on a certain point and then he came to ask my opinion. I simply gave him my opinion [...] and I disagreed with him. In front of my work colleagues, he lost his cool. He said, "You're trying to shove it down my throat." Then he tells me, "Well it's not going to happen!" "Hey!" I said, "take it easy. I'm not trying to shove anything down your throat. YOU asked my opinion. YOU got my opinion. It's not the same as yours. The decision is now up to you." That's it. You're not going to make me take the fall for this. I don't agree with you. - Joyce

In other cases, strained relationships or conflict in the workplace arose from the different ways of seeing or doing managerial work, and in competitive relationships between colleagues, among others, for promotions:

Colleagues were hiding information. We'd get in front of the boss, and I hadn't been given the information about a file we were working on together. Then he presented it to the boss and looked good doing it. I looked like I didn't know what I was talking about, and there I was thinking we had been working as a team, and I said to myself it's useless, it's not worth it. I didn't see it as a way of working, which might be just as efficient, but I truly believe that we work for the citizen first and then for X [mentions name of the organization], not to advance my career by not sharing information. - Fanny

Strained relationships or conflict in the workplace also led several participants to doubt their legitimacy as managers. These individuals felt they were not being taken seriously, were talked down to as if they knew nothing, and in some cases, had male colleagues steal their ideas and manage to get credit for them:

[…] as a female manager, I find that sometimes there are chauvinist comments. There is a great deal of paternalism. I'm a young woman, they all think that I'm their little girl and then they're like: "But of course, I'm going to explain it to you, my dear!" And I find this APPALLING. Yeah, for sure, there are times when it makes me mad, BUT luckily, I work in the cultural

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sector, and there are lots of women in the cultural sector. If I were working in technology or engineering, I'd have already quit, that's for sure! - Emma

Other female managers confided that certain workplace experiences had caused disgruntlement that escalated to bullying and—at times—violence:

I had an employee who was—who was very sexist, so having him under my supervision wasn't easy. He was—he was a man with a rather imposing physique, unlike me. So one time, he was unhappy about something [...] he came toward me and backed me into a doorway as he approached, so I had to lean against him and that was very intimidating. There were other staff members present during the incident. Naturally, there's a culture of silence in my business, so we don't report things. And management didn't take the incident seriously, because the four people who were there, the guy and three others, ended up saying the opposite of what I reported. So nobody took it seriously for X [mentions how long, more than one year], he was really very…he'd come near me, for example in a doorway, he'd get really close to me and I'd feel his breath on my ear or my hair moving […] up to the time when he threatened to hit one of my female superiors with a X [mentions object, threat of physical violence]. Then after than it was taken seriously, and he was laid off. So yes, it's because I was a woman in a position of authority that I had to suffer this. That's for sure. - Suzanne

Additionally, a few managers said that despite the mentoring they got from male colleagues, they were still exposed to sexism in the form of in appropriate sexualized or untoward comments, as Camille reveals:

[...] the white man mentoring who sees a young woman in a management position is also true. Oh, as much as they're going to call me sweetheart, they're also going to help me and coach me and say: "She's young woman who wants to take her place and she's got potential, so we're going to help her and we're going to bring her along too, and all that."- Camille

In sum, the processing and analysis of the interview materials revealed the integration of young managers can be complicated by mismatches between knowledge accumulated from previous training and job experiences and the demands of managerial work, environments where the organization of work may pose health risks, pressure to "prove themselves" in complying with group norms, and by strained relationships or conflicts in the workplace that may lead to violence. For the first of these sub-categories- mismatches between previously accumulated knowledge and managerial work- it might be useful to explore potential new avenues in better supporting these new managers as they integrate into their professional roles. Leadership training programs, innovative forms of support through mentoring, or even young manager groups or associations might be one way to offset the effects of these mismatches. As for integrating into environments where the organization of work poses health risks, our findings are consistent with other research that has shown how recent workplace transformations can adversely impact the well-being of managers (Eurofound, 2019; Farrell & Morris, 2013; Glée-Vermande & Beyer, 2012; Harris & Ogbonna, 2020; Pelletier, 2014; Worrall & Cooper, 2014). Turning to the sub-categories of being pressured to "prove oneself" to comply with group norms and strained relationships and conflict in the workplace that may lead to violence- it should be noted that only female participants brought up these experiences, which can indicate another layer of complexity to women's professional integration. It is safe to assume from this that young female managers continue to be exposed to sexism (Galerand & Kergoat, 2017; Hirata & Kergoat, 2017) as they ease into management roles. In fact, the findings in these last two sub-categories validate research confirming the manifestation of social gender relations that continue to shape interpersonal workplace dynamics with colleagues and management teams during the socio-professional integration of women managers (Giguère et al., 2020).

These findings are also in line with Molinier (2002), who posits that women who enter a traditionally male field are not only confronted with certain forms of resistance from men, but are also subservient to the interests of the dominant group, a group to which they do not belong from the outset. Similarly, these findings are consistent with other studies that reveal the persistence of ethnic (Alesia, 2017)or gendered (Alesia, 2017; Bates & Holt, 2021; Ekonen & Heilmann, 2021; Ezzedeen et al., 2015; Vaz et al., 2023) prejudice and stereotypes and varied forms of sexism (Goyer et al., 2019; Marry et al., 2017)as well as micro aggressions (ex. Mansplaining, manterrupting) (Vaz et al., 2023) that hinder women's access to leadership roles.

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

Our findings help illuminate and categorize the various workplace experiences of young managers during their professional integration in the early stages of their careers. We feel they enrich current scholarship, as this cohort remains a largely under-researched population (Barley & Kunda, 2001; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020; Korica et al., 2017) in studies in the transformation of managerial work (Farrell & Morris, 2013; Hassard et al., 2012; Worrall & Cooper, 2014), and those that show the impacts of these changes on the limitations or uncertainty of career paths (Farrell & Morris, 2013; Hassard et al., 2012). More broadly, our findings attest to the relevance of combining a life course approach (Fournier et al., 2016) and living work theory (Dejours,

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2009)to identify and examine the workplace experiences of young men and women in the early days of their management careers. Our findings reveal that gender remains a topical issue today (Galerand & Kergoat, 2017; Hirata & Kergoat, 2017), and, as it can affect professional integration for younger generations, needs to be taken into consideration. Despite the gains made by women entering management roles, our findings also show the persistence of inappropriate behaviour and sexism in the workplace that can trigger aggressive behaviours, which permeate into the experiences of young female managers. Having access to mentoring that supports women integrating into management yet not confronting forms of sexism at the same time in the end devalues and questions the place of women in the halls of power.

Our study has certain limitations, starting with its sample, which included both men and women; it would perhaps merit further research to compare different viewpoints of women, men and non-binary people. A second limitation concerns the Canadian context of the study; it would be prudent to document the experiences of this younger generation of managers in other geographical regions. Finally, further research is needed to better understand the workplace experiences of young managers, not only during their first forays into their professional roles, but as they continue to develop their careers as well.

Given the challenges of a shrinking Canadian workforce, our research could be useful in integrating and retaining young managers over the long term. With regard to practical considerations, our findings can be applied in considering new approaches or practices in the workplace ecosystem to foster their professional integration. One approach of note might be to develop support groups as forums for exchange and sharing experiences during this integration. Similarly, these findings may help to better train practitioners, particularly those in the field of guidance and counselling, so they are better prepared to assist these clients in the workplace as they become the managers of tomorrow.

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