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## **Employment Discrimination's Impact on African American's Professional and Personal Lives**

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**Employment Discrimination's Impact on African American's Professional and Personal  
Lives**

**By**

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**Advisor: Dr. Susan Bristow**

**An Honors Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of  
Science in Business Administration in Information Systems & Finance**

**Sam M. Walton College of Business**

**University of Arkansas**

**Fayetteville, Arkansas**

**August 1, 2022**

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## Abstract

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it illegal to discriminate against a person because of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The law also protects individuals from retaliation if they complain about discrimination, participate in an employment discrimination proceeding, or reasonably oppose discrimination. Although Title VII makes discrimination illegal, it is still present in the workplace. The objective of this thesis is to discuss employee discrimination based on race and sex. Specifically, I will analyze the current workplace discrimination against African American men and women as well as the psychological, physiological, and emotional effects of discrimination. Discrimination against these groups occurs in various forms in the workplace. Research suggests that members of these marginalized groups are more likely to experience employment discrimination than white men and women (Bleich et al., 2019, p. 1405). This thesis explores how discrimination is present in current workplaces, but it also suggests ways to become allies to those who are being discriminated against.

## Introduction

Oftentimes, members of majority groups such as white people are not aware of discrimination because they have not perceived it as much as minority groups (Bleich et al., 2019, p. 1405; Kim et al., 2018, p. 78). As referenced by Jennifer Young-Jin Kim, Caryn J. Block, and Duoc Nguyen (2018) “many whites tend to believe that racial minorities are faring better, and that racism is no longer a major problem” (p. 78). Some white Americans believe that racism is no longer a major problem, and that discrimination is not experienced by minority groups. These conclusions are contradicted by judicial evidence such as:

A. In July 2007, the EEOC argued that Walgreens engaged in “systemic race discrimination against African American retail management and pharmacy employees in promotion, compensation, and assignment” (The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], n.d.a). To resolve the case *EEOC v. Walgreen Co.*, Walgreens agreed to a proposed settlement of over \$20 million.

B. In the case *EEOC v. Diversified Maintenance Systems, LLC.*, “Janitorial service provider Diversified Maintenance Systems, LLC [paid] \$750,000 and furnish[ed] significant equitable relief to settle a federal race discrimination, harassment, and retaliation lawsuit” (EEOC, 2019, para. 1). The complaint alleged that “since at least January 2012, [the company] engaged in an ongoing pattern or practice of race discrimination against African American job applicants in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia metropolitan areas [by refusing] to hire Black applicants for custodian, lead custodian, or porter positions” (EEOC, 2019, para. 2) It is also claimed that they “racially harassed a Black janitorial supervisor by calling him racial

slurs and using abusive language in the presence of customers and employees” (EEOC, 2019, para. 3).

*C. EEOC v. Tobacco Superstores, Inc.* is an example of a company doing business in the state of Arkansas. In 2008 the “tobacco retail chain agreed to pay \$425,000 and provide significant remedial relief to settle a race discrimination lawsuit on behalf of qualified Black workers who were denied promotion to management positions (EEOC, n.d.a).

Discrimination can happen daily or as a singular major discriminatory event (Wheaton et al., 2017, p. 209). Overall, discrimination is understood as a social stressor that can lead to adverse physiological, psychological, and emotional effects. Several forms of discrimination exist. The main categories of discrimination discussed in this thesis are direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination is when a person is treated unfairly because of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability status, and more (EEOC, n.d.b). Discrimination encompasses all of these factors, but this thesis is specifically focusing on the experience of African Americans in the workplace. Indirect discrimination is defined as a workplace policy, practice, or rule that is applied to everyone equally but disadvantages an individual or group that shares the same protected characteristic. (Stewart, 2021, What is Indirect Discrimination section, para. 1). This form of discrimination is different than the former mostly due to the discriminating party’s intent. Direct discrimination usually involves explicit prejudicial intent, but intent is not explicitly present in indirect discrimination. African Americans can endure both of these forms of discrimination in the workplace regardless of company, tenure, role, educational background, and contributions.

## **Discrimination Forms**

Before diving into the negative effects of discrimination, this thesis will explain how individuals can be discriminated against. There are many forms of discrimination. Disparate treatment, or direct discrimination, is intentional employment discrimination and it encompasses harassment, workplace victimization, tokenism, stereotyping, and microaggressions amongst other things. Direct discrimination is a central focus of this thesis.

### **I. Direct Discrimination**

*Harassment:* Harassment is the act of aggressive intimidation or pressure: “Gender and racial harassment can be subtle or severe and pervasive and create a hostile and intimidating work environment” (Combs & Milosevic, 2015/2016, p. 22). It can be displayed in several different forms. Some forms of harassment are cyberbullying, stalking, microaggressions, power harassment, and verbal abuse such as racial slurs. Harassment should be avoided on all levels, regardless of if it is against minority or majority groups.

*Workplace victimization:* Workplace victimization can be defined as “acts of aggression perpetrated by one or more members of an organization that cause psychological, emotional, or physical harm to their intended target” (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Different physical and psychological abuse can be present as a person is victimized in the workplace. This abuse can range from “physical assaults, bullying, harassment, racial bias, sexual harassment, malicious gossip, or undermining a person's authority” (Victimization in the Workplace: Explanation & Trends, 2020, para. 3). Workplace victimization can also be described as a form of discrimination where an individual is treated unfairly because they either reported a discriminatory event or aided an individual who was a victim of discrimination. Workplace victimization is similar to bullying and should be treated as such.

*Tokenism:* Tokenism is another form of direct discrimination. Tokenism is less common than some of the other forms of direct discrimination as it represents minorities who are “the first or one of a kind in a particular context and who make up less than 15% of the workgroup, unit, or organization” (Combs & Milosevic, 2015/2016, p. 21). Companies that are self-aware of tokenism can use tools to increase their diverse employee population such as targeted recruiting and training.

*Stereotyping:* Stereotyping is a form of discrimination that is not exclusive to African Americans in the workplace. People tend to have preconceived notions about others regardless of their race or sex. Stereotype threat is when “individuals suspect their actions may be judged based on negative biases and stereotypes based on identity group membership, rather than merit” (Combs & Milosevic, 2015/2016, p. 21). This yields a constant sense of hyperawareness in people who are different in a highly visible manner, such as race and sex. This is not beneficial to individuals or workgroups. Managers and peers should not judge a person's productivity with things in mind that are not relevant to the role such as race and sex (Combs & Milosevic, 2015/2016, p. 21).

*Microaggressions:* Microaggressions can be described as statements, actions, or specific incidents that are indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against individuals of marginalized groups such as racial and ethnic minorities. Some examples of verbal microaggressions are “you are articulate for a black” and “you are a credit to your race.” The first way to reduce microaggressions is to become familiar with them.

## **II. Indirect Discrimination**

In the article "What is Indirect Discrimination in the Workplace?" Andy Stewart states:

Under the Equality Act of 2010, [a company] will be committing an employment offense if [it] indirectly discriminates against an individual or group of employees with a protected characteristic. These characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity,

race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. If a person or group within one or more of these categories feels as though a policy at work discriminates against them, they can use this law to take further action. (2022)

Indirect discrimination hidden within policies and rules in organizations is less straightforward than direct discrimination as it usually happens without intent. The policy or rule set in place disadvantages groups of individuals who share a particular characteristic such as sex, race, religion, and age. Often, it occurs when all employees are treated the same but certain groups are put at a disadvantage as a result of those policies. Disparate impact, or indirect discrimination, is often referred to as unintentional discrimination. It should not be confused with intentional discrimination or disparate treatment.

A. One landmark case involving indirect discrimination is *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* The company had a policy restricting black employees to its labor department by requiring a high school diploma for employment in any other department. According to the 1960 Census, “While 34% of white males in North Carolina had high-school diplomas, only 18% of blacks did” (“Griggs v. Duke Power Co.,” 2022, Facts section, para. 3). The highest paying jobs in the labor department were less than the lowest paying jobs in the other departments (“Griggs v. Duke Power Co.,” 2022, Facts section, para. 1). In 1965, the company implemented two tests, one measuring mechanical aptitude and another measuring IQ, that would allow employees without high-school diplomas to transfer to higher-paying departments (“Griggs v. Duke Power Co.,” 2022, Facts section, para. 2). Blacks were almost ten times less likely than whites to meet the transfer requirements: “58% of whites passed compared to 6% of blacks” (“Griggs v. Duke Power Co.,” 2022, Facts section, para. 3). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act “prohibits employment tests (when used as a decisive factor in employment decisions) that are not a reasonable measure of job performance, regardless of the absence of actual intent to discriminate” (“Griggs v. Duke Power Co.,” 2022, Judgment section, para. 2). Since the high school diploma requirement and aptitude tests were broad-based and not directly related to the jobs performed, Duke Power Co. was found in violation of Title VII by the Supreme Court.

B. A more recent case in 2018 involving disparate impact against females is *U.S. EEOC v. CSX Transportation, Inc.* According to the EEOC's lawsuit, CSX Transportation, Inc. “conducted isokinetic strength testing as a requirement for workers to be hired for various jobs” (EEOC, 2018). The EEOC declared that the strength test used by CSX Transportation, Inc. caused an unlawful “discriminatory impact on female workers seeking jobs as conductors, material handlers, clerks, and [other job categories]” (EEOC, 2018). The EEOC also found that CSX Transportation, Inc. used two other tests as a requirement for employment in certain jobs. One test measured aerobic capacity and another measured arm endurance (EEOC, 2018). These tests caused an unlawful discriminatory effect on female workers. In conclusion, “CSX Transportation, Inc. [paid] \$3.2 million and furnished other relief to settle [the] lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission” (EEOC, 2018).

The tests in these cases exemplify indirect employment discrimination. Additionally, this is evidence that equality and equity are different. Although employees were treated equally in that they all had to take the same tests, the situations were not equitable because they disproportionately affected minorities. To further comment, intent does not absolve discrimination. As stated in the article “What is the Difference Between Direct and Indirect Discrimination?,” “Just because a policy wasn’t intended to negatively affect certain people, doesn’t mean that it isn’t discriminatory or shouldn’t be remedied” (Brown Kwon & Lam LLP., 2021, Indirect Discrimination section, para. 5) This leads me to infer: a victim could feel the same effects regardless of knowing the discriminator is trying to create a harmful environment or not. African Americans are subject to learn how to live with direct and indirect discrimination to become comfortable in America.

### **Discrimination’s Negative Effects**

In addition to the negative feelings at the onset of experiencing discrimination, it can affect an individual’s health over a long period of time (Clark et al., 2021). Many variables play a role in the lasting effects of discrimination. These variables are rooted in individuals' race, gender, age, and tenure amongst other things. The psychological, physiological, and emotional effects that discrimination possesses can be overwhelming and are significant. In order to understand the full impact of discrimination against minorities, it is imperative to understand these negative effects. Depression, John Henryism, anxiety, stress, job dissatisfaction, and poor coping mechanisms are daily effects African Americans overcome or succumb to. These effects are interrelated.

*Depression:* Depression is a psychiatric disorder that is developing into an ever-present aspect of the world and is worsened by discrimination (Hudson et al., 2016). According to the World Health Organization, “Approximately 280 million people in the world have depression” (World Health Organization, 2021, Overview section, para. 1). Depression can impact an employee's productivity. It affects millions of people worldwide making it “the fourth most common disability to date linked to stressors” (Hudson et al., 2016, p. 222). In the article, “Racial Discrimination, John Henryism, and Depression Among African Americans,” the authors illustrate aspects of the adverse effects of discrimination and link depression to socioeconomic status (SES) (Hudson et al., 2016). To further note, “Evidence from previous studies indicates that racial discrimination is significantly associated with depression and that African Americans with higher levels of socioeconomic status (SES) report greater exposure to racial discrimination compared to those with lower SES levels” (Hudson et al., 2016, Abstract section). African Americans with higher SES usually have more opportunities to be discriminated against than those with lower SES. The increased quantities of SES are a result of achieving higher levels of education which can lead to entry into higher-paying occupations



(Hudson et al., 2016, p. 222). Data collected and drawn from the National Survey of American Life Reinterview and Analyses showed that “greater levels of education were positively associated with racial discrimination and increased levels of racial discrimination were positively related to depression, controlling for all sociodemographic factors” (Hudson et al., 2016). Several African Americans who are given the chance to excel are immersed by people from majority groups leaving them vulnerable to being discriminated against.

*John Henryism:* John Henryism is a theory and or strategy for a measure of high-effort coping among African Americans who face prolonged exposure to stress (Hudson et al., 2016, p. 226). Oftentimes, the stress African Americans are coping with stems from the strenuous process of upward social mobility. Consequently, some African Americans have high levels of John Henryism because they began at the bottom of the SES ladder. Expending an excessive amount of effort, like in John Henryism, to cope results in major psychological costs such as stress, anxiety, and depression. The article also states, “racial discrimination is a potent stressor, related to both increased levels of depressive symptoms as well as increased odds of depression” (Hudson et al., 2016, p. 222). African Americans encounter stress in the workplace commonly as they navigate the hierarchies of the corporate world.

John Henryism can be used to improve one’s SES. Some African Americans must give high efforts to overcome poverty. Darrel Hudson and others state African Americans have to endure an “arduous process of upward social mobility just to improve their SES” (Hudson et al., 2016, p. 222). Discrimination plays a role in this endurance. One factor that impacts discrimination is the interconnectedness of race and class. According to Hudson et al., “Many African Americans, even those who appear to be solidly middle class, begin their lives in poverty” (2016, pp. 222 - 223). Beginning life in poverty is a deciding factor for future social class mobility. Additionally, according to Hudson et al., “42% of African Americans born into the bottom 10th of the income distribution remained in that same income bracket as adults” (2016, p. 223). Most African Americans who level up to the middle class started in poverty and those who are still in poverty probably started there as well.

*Stress and Anxiety:* Rose-Smith notes “Many African Americans experience high levels of stress in their work environment” (2021, p. 3). Stress can be linked to job dissatisfaction, sickness absence, and depression amongst other things. As cited by Rose-Smith, “Responses to stress may be related to feelings, such as anxiety, depression, irritability, and fatigue; behavior such as being withdrawn, aggressive, tearful, and unmotivated; thinking difficulties; or physical symptoms such as palpitations, nausea, and headaches” (2021, p. 21). Unpredictable and uncontrollable situations of discrimination against African Americans may cause stress in the workplace. For example, verbal attacks, stereotypes, other forms of harassment, job insecurity, and microaggressions can be stressful for African Americans in the workplace. Stress is intertwined with other negative effects of discrimination.

Prolonged stress is a risk factor for anxiety (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2021, When the Natural Stress section, para. 3). Some symptoms of anxiety are increased heart rate, hyperventilation, sweating, trembling, feeling nervous, restless, or tense (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2018, Symptoms section). Longer-term complications of anxiety include depression, substance misuse, insomnia, headaches and chronic pain, social isolation, problems functioning, poor quality of life, and suicide (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2018, Complications section, para. 1). Some ways to prevent anxiety are avoiding alcohol and substance abuse, staying active, and getting help in the form of therapy. Due to current work environments, these negative psychological, physiological, and emotional effects of discrimination are some of the things African Americans deal with. The effects are not only present in the workplace, but they also impact daily life.

In conclusion, discrimination can cause high levels of depression, John Henryism, stress, and anxiety which yields job dissatisfaction and poor coping mechanisms. Job dissatisfaction can cause loneliness at work, sickness absence, intentions to quit, and negative job attitudes. Poor coping mechanisms include drug misuse, alcoholism, food disorders, high blood pressure, and disengagement. These things can all be linked to African Americans' poorer health compared to their white counterparts (Rose-Smith, 2021, p. 36).

### **Organizational Responses and Individual Recommendations to Reduce Discrimination**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion helps companies in a variety of ways. Some of the most important benefits of diverse work groups are different perspectives, increased creativity, better decision making, faster problem solving, higher employee engagement, and less employee turnover (Zojceska, 2018, What are the Benefits? section). Discrimination against diverse employees negates the benefits of hiring them in the first place. It is a poor investment to disrespect diverse opinions, cultures, backgrounds, and people. There is often a disconnect between policies and actions at some companies. Some employees do not adhere to laws that are in place to reduce workplace discrimination. This disconnect and lack of adherence can bring lawsuits like the aforementioned cases. Reducing discrimination should be at the forefront of every company's diversity, equity, and inclusion plans.

One important organizational response to reduce discrimination is employee affinity groups also called employee or business resource groups. Affinity groups are organized based on identity, characteristics, or experience. They are often led by employees and involve protected characteristics, such as sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, national origin, disability, and veteran status. Examples of affinity groups are mental health and wellbeing, veterans, and the black employee network. Affinity groups give employees a sense of belonging inside companies. Delta Air Lines was named one of the Best Workplaces for Diversity for three consecutive years from 2016 to 2018 by *Great Place to Work* and *Fortune* magazine (Davis, 2018). Delta has several business resource groups which provide networking and community outreach

opportunities for diverse employees. Delta's business resource groups are one of their most important methods for retaining diverse employees in the company (Delta, n.d., Business Resource Groups section). State Farm is another example of a company with employee groups implemented for diverse employees. The company has achieved continuous success with diversity retention. State Farm has been recognized on several occasions for being an employer committed to diversity (State Farm, n.d., Awards and Recognitions section). *Seramount* magazine recognized State Farm as one of the Best Companies for Multicultural Women from 2009 to 2021, and the editors of *Black Enterprise* magazine have recognized State Farm on their list of Best Companies for Diversity from 2007 to 2019 (State Farm, n.d., Awards and Recognitions section). The longevity of success with diversity, equity, and inclusion could be partly attributed to its employee groups.

Another important organizational response to reduce discrimination is mentorship programs. These programs are a great way for diverse employees to connect, grow, and understand each other. According to the article "Why Diversity Programs Fail" (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016, Engagement section, para. 6) "Georgetown's business school dean David Thomas discovered in research on mentoring, that white male executives don't feel comfortable reaching out to young women and minority men." Mentorship groups are useful for minority and majority employees regardless of identity. Additionally, implementing mentorship programs can help prepare managers to mentor their diverse employees. Moreover, employees benefit from mentors when they are in a new environment. A mentor should be an experienced and trusted leader. It is recommended that companies adopt mentorship programs for the benefits mentors and mentees receive. By nature, mentorship programs encourage goal setting. According to Robert Half's article "How Mentoring in the Workplace Can Strengthen Your Company," "Ninety-three percent of the workers surveyed said goal setting is important to their work performance" (2017, para. 3). Mentors have work experience which helps mentees set attainable goals. Other benefits Robert Half states are increased knowledge transfer, job satisfaction, and stronger internal networks. These things not only benefit mentees and mentors, but they also help companies as a whole. Currently, two companies using mentorship to their advantage are Mastercard and Schneider Electric (Schreiber-Shearer, 2022, 3 Customers section). In Nicole Schreiber-Shearer's article "3 Companies showcasing successful mentorship programs" they mentioned additional benefits such as boosting employee retention, promoting diversity and inclusion, and breaking down silos (Schreiber-Shearer, 2022, The Top Mentoring Program Benefits section). Mentorship can help reduce discrimination which also helps companies retain diverse employees. Mentorship programs are best when co-piloted by employees and employers.

Reducing workplace discrimination is not achieved with one solution. However, these recommendations can be used together to drive change at companies. Some ways to ensure affinity groups' success are to "draft, implement, and enforce a written affinity group policy; train managers and affinity group leaders on best practices to ensure compliance with applicable law, rules, and regulations; and protect against legal claims" (Practical Law Labor &

Employment, n.d., Policies and Best Practices section, para. 2). All of these things can help with the longevity of affinity groups. Some ways to ensure mentorship programs' success are to “use a data-informed approach when matching mentors and mentees; establish mentorship guidelines; and make mentorship an integral part of your culture” (University of Massachusetts, 2020, How to Ensure section). These actions help support the development of mentoring in the workplace. Combatting workplace discrimination with affinity groups and mentorship programs can help improve the negative effects that stem from discrimination.

## Research Synthesis

During my research, I found different laws, judicial cases, journal articles, website articles, blogs, online lessons, and anthologies that helped me understand the current environment of workplace discrimination against African Americans. This research led me to infer that African Americans experience various forms of discrimination in the workplace, and discrimination has negative effects on African Americans, but individuals and organizations can help reduce it.

Table 1. *Research Synthesis Matrix*

Topics	Researched Format	Citations	Summary
<i>Workplace Discrimination</i>	Journal Article Journal Article Court Case Court Case Journal Article Court Case Blog	(Bleich et al., 2019) (Kim et al., 2018) (EEOC, n.d.a) (EEOC, 2019) (Wheaton et al., 2017) (EEOC, n.d.b) (Stewart, 2021)	Workplace discrimination is present in the United States. It has been proven by recent court cases, articles, and blogs.
<i>Discrimination Forms</i>	Anthology Article Journal Article Abstract Online Lesson Court Case Court Case Website Article	(Combs & Milosevic, 2015/2016) (Aquino & Thau, 2009) (Victimization in the Workplace: Explanation & Trends, 2020) ("Griggs v. Duke Power Co.," 2022) (EEOC, 2018) (Brown Kwon & Lam LLP., 2021)	There are several forms of discrimination. African American men and women experience discrimination in various ways.
<i>Discrimination's Negative Effects on African Americans</i>	Research Article Journal Article Website Article Dissertation Website Article Website Article	(Clark et al., 2021) (Hudson et al., 2016) (World Health Organization, 2021) (Rose-Smith, 2021) (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2021) (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2018)	Evidence of the short- and long-term adverse effects of discrimination is described in these different sources.

Topics	Researched Format	Citations	Summary
<i>Workplace Discrimination Solutions</i>	Blog Website Article Website Article Website Article Magazine Article Blog Blog Website Article Blog Website Article	(Zojceska, 2018) (Davis, 2018) (Delta, n.d.) (State Farm, n.d.) (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016) (Half, 2017) (Schreiber-Shearer, 2022) (Practical Law Labor & Employment, n.d.) (University of Massachusetts, 2020) (EEOC, n.d.c)	Individuals and organizations can positively combat workplace discrimination against minorities. Numerous ways to reduce workplace discrimination are discussed throughout this thesis.

When people understand the environment of this discrimination, they will be able to assess it in their current workplace. After they assess discrimination in their workplace, they will know where to start driving long-term change. These changes can arrive from mentorship programs, affinity groups, and adhering to the EEOC's suggestions for reducing workplace discrimination among other things (EEOC, n.d.c). Employees and employers who become allies to African Americans in the workplace can help them overcome workplace discrimination.

### Personal Reflection on Workplace Discrimination

The research on workplace discrimination I use to support this thesis is validated by my personal experiences. I have work experience at a prominent eCommerce company, a major logistics company, and a flagship educational institution. Currently, I am a financial analyst participating in an intensive entry-level rotational program. I am on my second of four assignments across the United States which are designed to prepare me for large leadership roles later in my career. Three forms of discrimination I have experienced and or encountered daily in the workplace are tokenism, harassment, and microaggressions.

By definition, I am a token in the business vertical at my current company as there are five black men and two black women out of 51 total employees. Only three blacks are people managers in the vertical. I have been the only African American or one of few African American persons on all my workplace teams. Being underrepresented has been normal since I began taking business courses in college. I have learned to be comfortable in such situations. When I experience tokenism, it can cause feelings of loneliness and exclusion. Sometimes I feel like a target for discrimination or representation of the black community. Often, people will rely on me to speak for the majority of the African American population in the organization. I have experienced tokenism in three different companies and overcoming the backlash is a continuous feat.

Additionally, another common form of discrimination I overcome is microaggressions. An anecdotal example of this came at the hands of one of my general managers. In a heated team discussion about a major cost initiative, the general manager abruptly stood and spoke over me, after I walked to a whiteboard to begin visually explaining the mechanisms of the cost initiative. His action was a microaggression and this probably would not have happened if I were not African American. As discussed earlier, microaggressions can be defined as subtle actions such as this experience. It was extremely embarrassing as several other financial analysts and senior leaders were in the room. I was the only African American financial analyst in the room and no other employees were interrupted during the meeting. I gathered myself and did not allow my emotions to overtake the situation. I felt extreme levels of disrespect. Most importantly, I felt like my opinion and intellect were not valued.

Another microaggression I face in my current role is being told things like “My position is not needed” and asked, “Where is the value in my position?” by colleagues in other departments. Other financial analysts do not receive these kinds of questions. Some employees in other departments are not accustomed to a financial analyst at their sites. The finance department in my region has been short-staffed for years. Only eight financial analysts provide coverage for the five sites at the moment. The regional finance department has a budget for three analysts at each of the sites or fifteen total for the region. Currently, the region is understaffed by seven people. These numbers support that being a token leaves a person vulnerable to microaggressions and verbal harassment. To protect my job security and live in my passion, I use situations like these as motivation. I try my best to refrain from showing negative emotions in the workplace because I have to.

I grew up in a low-income household in the poverty-stricken city of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Neither of my parents obtained a college degree. However, they perpetually encouraged me to attend college and excel. They understand that gaining an education is an ideal way to improve one's SES. The obstacles I encounter while improving my SES and overcoming poverty caused me to experience John Henryism. I have experienced high levels of stress throughout college and the early stages of my career. Due to my stress, I partake in positive high-effort coping. Through coping, my main goal is to gain positive outcomes from negative situations and experiences. I choose to cope positively because it is better for my long-term health.

Examples of my positive high-effort coping are physical activity, therapy, yoga, and meditation. Physical activity helps release tension in my body. It also helps calm heightened emotions. Physical activity is my keystone habit, it has always been a part of my life. I am consistent with other things such as work and hobbies when I am routinely active. Therapy is a great way to talk to a non-biased person. My therapist has helped me distinguish discrimination as well as overcome major discriminatory events. She gives me several mechanisms to cope such as breathing exercises, questions to ask myself, and recommendations for high-pressure situations. I am proud to be comfortable with attending therapy. The positive effects outweigh

the stigma I once had. Mindful minutes is a phrase I use to describe meditating, yoga, and reading. Mindful minutes help me slow down and sort out my thoughts. These activities can be done almost anywhere which is helpful when I am not at home. They are especially needed when I cannot exercise or attend therapy. Mindful minutes keep me in a calm and collected mental state. I recommend employees experiencing John Henryism implement my coping mechanisms and use them in their daily lives.

Positive coping can help overcome the effects of discrimination. Always assume good intent to decipher if discrimination is present or not. Although issues between workplace discrimination and inequalities have been addressed there is more to be done. All people can educate themselves and act on what they learn to fully address discrimination. My academic research and my personal experiences are evidence of the current environment of workplace discrimination against African Americans. The key topics I inferred from my research support how discrimination can be overcome by African Americans, overwhelming for them, yet overlooked by others. I ask employees and employers to accept the truth about the current environment of discrimination against African Americans in the workplace. I believe this will be one of the first steps toward long-term change. Becoming allies to African Americans is another action employees and employers can take to help reduce workplace discrimination against us.

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Susan Bristow, for guiding me through the research and the development of ideas for this thesis. Dr. Bristow, you have continually encouraged and supported me since I joined the information systems undergraduate program at the University of Arkansas. I appreciate you forever. Additionally, thank you and the other members of the information systems department for naming me one of three Most Outstanding Information Systems Students for the class of 2021. Receiving the award and completing this thesis are two of the greatest milestones of my life.

Second, I would like to thank Diamond Maxfield and the rest of my family: mom, dad, and siblings. You all have been my biggest supporters through my transition from Pine Bluff, Arkansas to Fayetteville, Arkansas, and beyond. Truly, I could not have finished my degree during the pandemic without all of you. I encourage you all to have faith and perseverance on your continuous journeys to peace and success.

I would like to thank the University of Arkansas, specifically, The Distinguished Walton College of Business. You all have a unique ability to cultivate potential talent into great business leaders. I am proud of my home state for developing such a thorough collegiate business school. You all have prepared me for my current and future success in business and other areas of my life. Lastly, to the donors who made college affordable for a less fortunate African American male from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, may God bless all of you.

- *Trey D. Williams*



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## Appendix

1. Table 1. *Research Synthesis Matrix*

Topics	Researched Format	Citations	Summary
<i>Workplace Discrimination</i>	Journal Article Journal Article Court Case Court Case Journal Article Court Case Blog	(Bleich et al., 2019) (Kim et al., 2018) (EEOC, n.d.a) (EEOC, 2019) (Wheaton et al., 2017) (EEOC, n.d.b) (Stewart, 2021)	Workplace discrimination is present in the United States. It has been proven by recent court cases, articles, and blogs.
<i>Discrimination Forms</i>	Anthology Article Journal Article Abstract Online Lesson Court Case Court Case Website Article	(Combs & Milosevic, 2015/2016) (Aquino & Thau, 2009) (Victimization in the Workplace: Explanation & Trends, 2020) ("Griggs v. Duke Power Co.," 2022) (EEOC, 2018) (Brown Kwon & Lam LLP., 2021)	There are several forms of discrimination. African American men and women experience discrimination in various ways.
<i>Discrimination's Negative Effects on African Americans</i>	Research Article Journal Article Website Article Dissertation Website Article Website Article	(Clark et al., 2021) (Hudson et al., 2016) (World Health Organization, 2021) (Rose-Smith, 2021) (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2021) (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2018)	Evidence of the short- and long-term adverse effects of discrimination is described in these different sources.
<i>Workplace Discrimination Solutions</i>	Blog Website Article Website Article Website Article Magazine Article Blog Blog Website Article Blog Website Article	(Zojceska, 2018) (Davis, 2018) (Delta, n.d.) (State Farm, n.d.) (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016) (Half, 2017) (Schreiber-Shearer, 2022) (Practical Law Labor & Employment, n.d.) (University of Massachusetts, 2020) (EEOC, n.d.c)	Individuals and organizations can positively combat workplace discrimination against minorities. Numerous ways to reduce workplace discrimination are discussed throughout this thesis.

2. *Hyperlink to Canva Presentation -*

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAFEtSduvQs/xFUzPT1jQSa1zHfu4q1\\_DQ/view?utm\\_content=DAFEtSduvQs&utm\\_campaign=share\\_your\\_design&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=shareyourdesignpanel](https://www.canva.com/design/DAFEtSduvQs/xFUzPT1jQSa1zHfu4q1_DQ/view?utm_content=DAFEtSduvQs&utm_campaign=share_your_design&utm_medium=link&utm_source=shareyourdesignpanel)