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An Exploration of the Lived Experience of Human Resources Professionals in the Hospitality Industry: A Qualitative Research Study

Nadia R. Lucien

Nova Southeastern University, nadia.lucien10@gmail.com

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An Exploration of the Lived Experience of Human Resources Professionals in the
Hospitality Industry: A Qualitative Research Study

by

Nadia R. Lucien

A Dissertation Presented to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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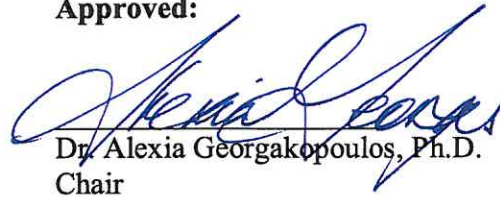
Nadia R. Lucien
December 2016

Nova Southeastern University
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

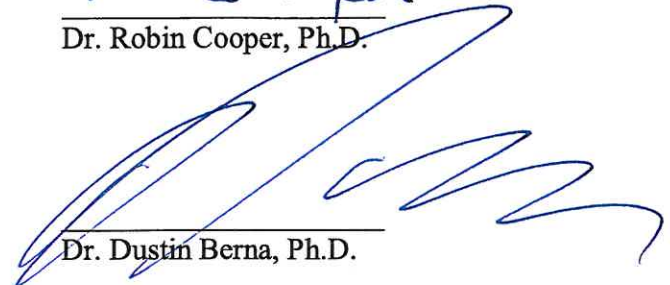
This dissertation was submitted by Nadia R. Lucien under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

12/07/16
Date of Defense

Approved:


Dr. Alexia Georgakopoulos, Ph.D.
Chair


Dr. Robin Cooper, Ph.D.


Dr. Dustin Berna, Ph.D.

3/2/2017
Date of Final Approval


Dr. Alexia Georgakopoulos, Ph.D.
Chair

Dedication

The primary dedication goes to the wonderful, the great Allah, who guided me through this journey. I give thanks for his bestowing upon me his grace and peace, by allowing me to fulfill my spiritual journey during Umrah Hajj, Al humdulallah! I thank him for showering me with grace during the time that I was unemployed. All I will say is: Mashallah! Mashallah! Tabarak Allah! I give thanks for his protection and guidance. Next, I dedicate this to my beautiful daughter, Erica Noor Pierre-Louis, MPA. Thanks for being the cheerleader that I needed throughout this long journey, including the job losses. May Allah continue to bless you for your kindness and understanding and guide you through your own academic journey.

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Abstract

Employee abuse and discrimination appear rampant in many workplaces, as indicated by the annual Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reports from 2014 and 2015. This study was designed to explore employment discrimination practices specifically within the hospitality industry. The researcher used conversational dialogue to capture the experiences of human resources (HR) professionals who may have observed employee discrimination in the hospitality industry. Using semi-structured interviews with the participants in the study, the researcher obtained rich descriptions of their lived world with respect to employee discrimination. The findings of the study, which indicate that there has been no discrimination in the Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach regions of Florida, are both perplexing and intriguing, as they provide an opportunity for critical examination of the conditional, and protectionist reasons why HR professionals defended the industry as non-discriminatory against employees who registered discrimination complaints. Since a wealth of literature evidences discrimination in the industry, the findings of this study prompted a discussion of the participants' non-discrimination responses, which helped the researcher formulate a critical analysis leading to the construction of a theory of deniability as a conditioned mechanism of industry protectionism. This theory may appropriately contextualize the conflict among employees, HR professionals, and the hospitality industry at large, which appears to be nuanced by the Marxist template that the wealthy always view the working masses with fear. The results of this study demonstrate that seeking information about discriminatory practices from HR professionals in this industry may yield protectionism rather than recognition of the suffering experienced by discriminated employees.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study was conducted to explore the world of human resources (HR) professionals in the hospitality industry who dealt with recurring patterns of employment discrimination. A review of annual reports from 2004 and 2005 generated by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014, 2015) revealed that employee discrimination is on the rise within organizations. This information is based on the number of cases filed by employees who believed they had been victims of discrimination; it was collated by the EEOC database after the events of September 11, 2001. The EEOC annual report lists information about the types of complaints, separated by state, and also provides the national average for each category of complaints filed. For example, discrimination charges based on national origin increased from 7.6% to 8.5% in Florida in 2014, which presents a contrast to its neighboring states, including Alabama and Georgia (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, the number of complaints filed in the state of Florida is relatively small as compared to the national average (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014); however, the number of complaints in Florida has significantly increased within the past several years. In 2014, for example, the EEOC (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014) reported that complaints in the state of Florida were distributed among the following categories: 29.1% based on race; 28.7% based on gender; 18.8% based on national origin; and 4.1% based on religion. These numbers are relatively high as compared to those reported in Alabama and Georgia, although fewer immigrants reside in those states than in Florida. In addition,

percentages may not be accurate, as many cases of discrimination may not have been reported by employees who feared retaliation from their employers (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014).

Further research on discrimination based on factors such as race, sex, age, religion, and national origin has been conducted. This particular area of research requires more studies to better identify the reasons why the number of complaints is rising. My goal for this study is to raise awareness and educate business leaders, owners, operators, and managers about discrimination practices in the workplace. To better understand and discover ways by which discrimination can be managed or eradicated. Furthermore, it is aimed to discover the underlying factors that continues to bring about discrimination in the workplace. The results of this study could open the door to additional research that can lead to changes in the structure of HR system within the organization.

Background of the Problem

Employment discrimination is a detrimental factor in any organization, particularly when workplace leaders choose to discriminate against their employees. According to the 2015 EEOC report (U.S. EEOC, 2015), the organization secured \$356 million in damages for victims of employment discrimination. A total of 142 lawsuits were filed; 100 involved only one employee, and the other 42 involved two or more employees. According to Heneman et al. (2012), discrimination occurs when a person or group of people is treated differently than another group of people. Workplace discrimination occurs when managers or co-workers make other employees feel alienated or ashamed and, as a result, the employees leave the establishment to seek employment elsewhere, with hopes of being treated differently. In the past, discrimination most often

occurred based on employees' race, age, or national origin. However, a new wave of discrimination has been observed based on what's referred to as *lookism*, whereby employees are terminated because of certain physical features or their general appearance (Cavico, Muffler, & Mujtaba, 2012).

Cavico and Mujtaba (2011) discussed a new form of discrimination practice in the workplace within the context of a case in which an employee was fired because she was "too hot" (p. 2). According to Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, a person cannot be discriminated against based on age, sex, race, gender, national origin, color, or creed (U.S. EEOC, 2015). However, other forms of discrimination based on factors such as lookism are becoming more prevalent within organizations.

Another unprecedented form of employment discrimination surfaced after the events of September 11, 2011. As a result of this event, Muslim Americans began to experience an increase in masked forms of discrimination, including wrongful terminations, lay-offs without cause, and the inability to find suitable employment (Cavico & Mujtaba, 2011). According to Cavico and Mutjaba (2011), tension and conflicts within the workplace have also been on the rise since the events of September 11. Some employees have been harassed or singled out by managers and co-workers because of their names or appearance; this produces feelings of frustration for these individuals who simply want to work (Cavico & Mujtaba, 2011). Many employees who have experienced this kind of discrimination find themselves in the HR department filing legitimate complaints with the hope of finding solutions. Others opt to resign instead of going through the pain and humiliation caused by discrimination. Although diverse, the workforce in the U.S. is plagued with many issues of discrimination. The statistical

reports issued annually by the EEOC continue to reveal that many employees of Arab experience ongoing discrimination in the workplace (U.S. EEOC, 2015).

Steinbugler (2006) studied the effects of stereotyping, another form of discrimination against minorities. One participant in the study stated, “Blacks are lazy” (p.16); they prefer to be on welfare, they do not speak English correctly (Steinbugler, 2006). Such perceptions of minorities can contribute to discriminatory practices, although the research was focused on the disparity that exists between Black and White neighborhoods. This is one example of preconceived notions that exist in today’s society.

Roscigno, Mong, Byron, and Tester (2007) assert that a large percentage of aging adults in the workplace between the ages of 55 and 70 have been subjected to age discrimination in the workplace from either a manager or co-worker. Ageism, also known as age discrimination, is another form of discrimination that continues to resurface in organizations. It occurs when employees who are over a certain age are not hired because of their age. Although not widely reported, employees and applicants in workplaces around the world continue to experience this form of discrimination. Furthermore, some minority groups such as Haitians and other Blacks from the Caribbean who also experience discrimination in the workplace are less likely to file lawsuits out of fear that their employer will retaliate. Immigrants who experience discrimination based on their national origin or age would rather not leave their current employer in search of other employment because of the potential for them to receive negative references.

The EEOC annual statistical report noted that in 2002, age discrimination was the fastest growing form of discrimination (U.S. EEOC, 2002). According Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2003), the Age Discrimination Employment Act (ADEA) prevents

discrimination against employees over the age of 40 (p. 707). Quan, Dattero, and Galup (2008) point out that since 2002, cases of age discrimination have been on the rise, and in certain industries, employers have not been recruiting employees above the age of 35. Although the refusal to hire individuals over the age of 35 is discriminatory, this practice is not uncommon. Furthermore, Quan et al. suggest that the stereotyping of older workers is prevalent in the Information Technology (IT) world. This practice is being observed worldwide, including within the US. For instance, older workers are labeled stubborn, inflexible, or less productive, which is ultimately a form of age-based discrimination. Instead of being invited to use their expertise to train newly hired employees, older workers are being replaced by much younger workers and forced to accept early retirement (Quan, Dattero, & Galup 2008, p. 25).

Another form of workplace discrimination known as disparate treatment occurs when an employer knowingly treats an employee unfairly based on his or her race or sex (Heneman, Judge, & Kanmeyer-Muller, 2012). Disparate treatment can occur during the hiring process when an employer hires for specific positions based on sex. Title VII of the Civil Rights of 1964 (U.S. EEOC, 2015) allows employers to hire based on a provision known as Bona Fide Occupational Qualification; however, when citing this provision, employers need to be aware of legal challenges that may arise. Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ) cannot be based on race or color. For instance, in the 1990s, the restaurant chain Hooter's refused to hire male servers, using BFOQ to support its position (Millman, 1995). A group of male applicants challenged the company's refusal to hire them by filing a case of discrimination against the organization. The restaurant chain claimed that it only hires females because of the outfits designed for the

servers; because their decision was supported by the provision of BFOQ, the male applicants lost the case (Millman, 1995). Considerations for when BFOQ can be appropriately cited should be made carefully by anyone recruiting for positions that claim this exemption. An employer can claim Bona fide occupational qualifications under title VII of the Civil Rights of 1964, as long the claim of Bona fide occupational qualification to hire a specific type of employee for a specific job and is not discriminating against gender, race, age, and national origin. Therefore, the employer is exempt and can make a claim of BFOQ; however, organizations should be cognizant of the ramifications (Heneman, Judge, & Kanmeyer-Muller, 2012), (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright, 2003).

Problem Statement

Employment discrimination is a significant issue for managers and leaders in organizations. From 2010 to 2015 the number of charges filed in the state of Florida grew from 7.8% to 8.5%, which is a significant and alarming increase when compared to the statistics for other states (U.S. EEOC, 2015). These increased percentages suggest that no corrective actions are being taken to ensure that the issue of employment discrimination is either eradicated or managed. Sociologist Charles Perrow (1986) claims that in order to understand organizational behavior, one must first examine the goals of that organization, its policies and procedures, the makeup of its human capital, and the levels of education among employees. According to Perrow, these contributing factors can predict the type of power structure that governs that organization.

Phillips (2001) asserts that the workplace has always been a breeding ground for conflict. Kapoor (2010) adds that the workforce is diverse, and the lack of homogeneity

among employees presents a challenge to some managers. In addition, HR professionals find themselves searching for answers to alleviate the issues at hand. This was conducted to answer the following questions: What are HR professionals doing to help alleviate the problem of discrimination in the workplace? How are HR professionals in the hospitality industry dealing with recurring patterns of employment discrimination? Why are these issues prevalent in today's workplaces?

According to Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, and Inderrieden (2005), individuals are connected to groups; organizations, therefore, serve as a link connecting all the employees within them. Cases of employment discrimination that go unreported tend to be discussed among employees within an organization, becoming common knowledge and raising questions about discrimination. In the past, employees who experienced discrimination on the job would have transitioned out of the job instead of seeking legal action. It has become increasingly more challenging to acquire exact figures of employment discrimination cases; though the EEOC publishes certain statistics annually, many cases remain unreported.

Purpose Statement and Goals

The purpose of this research study is aimed at finding out about the lived world of HR professionals in the hospitality industry. It was designed to satisfy my curiosity about employment discrimination and how others in the field have been dealing with complaints in their respective organizations. The annual report published by the EEOC shows a multitude of employment discrimination complaints filed throughout the US as well as a number of discrimination cases litigated in court. I have personally experienced employment discrimination, as has my father. These experiences have led me to be

concerned that powerful industries profit off of labor less fortunate individuals, impacting their lives in both positive and negative ways.

Although a great number of research studies have been conducted on the subject of workplace discrimination practices, not many studies have focused on the hospitality industry. Another goal of the present study is to raise awareness by educating leaders, managers, and owners in the workforce who lack awareness about the rampant issue of employment discrimination. Because I worked in the industry for 10 years, I can use my personal background to shed light on the population I chose to study.

Context of the Research

According to Cloke (2001), conflict is a natural phenomenon that has always existed, and will continue to exist, between two parties in a relationship. This relationship could be personal, professional, or international, as is the case in the hospitality industry. In order to understand and effectively manage this phenomenon, one must have the ability to understand various types of human behavior within the context of workplace conflict. Anger and other emotions must be taken into consideration when dealing with parties in conflict. For the purpose of this study, the goal is to address workplace conflicts between managers and employees. According to Cloke, conflicts tend to occur when there is a lack of cohesion or collaboration and an inability to understand the connection between humanity and the world as a whole. As a result, conflict exists in the hospitality industry because managers and employees often clash. Managers feel the need to be in control and claim superiority, while the employees fight for the ability to earn a decent living and receive a paycheck every two weeks. This reflects important characteristics of conflict, as Lulofs (2004) explains that intangible

commodities such as superiority, power, and control tend to be important to feuding parties.

Organizational conflicts are issues that occur between parties within an organization. They can occur between two managers, between managers and supervisors, or between managers and employees. Because human beings are constantly interacting within systems, and one party is almost always imposing something on the other, conflict is bound to happen. Conflict does not occur in a vacuum; it stems from unresolved issues that become a hindrance for the people navigating a particular environment. According to Phillips (1992), the workplace is a breeding ground for conflict. Thomas (1992) proposes some ways to assist in managing conflict within organizations; he points out that some of the key factors that lead to conflict include organizational structure and cultural issues.

Creswell (2007) concluded that people construct their own reality based on the environment that they live in. This includes individuals who are part of a research situation, and therefore, these participants are a product of that world they live in and therefore create their own reality. As a former HR practitioner in the hospitality industry, I have personally experienced workplace discrimination. My religious, professional, and personal values and beliefs, coupled with these experiences, influence my worldview. I am also an immigrant from the island nation of Haiti, and over the years I have observed many of my fellow countrymen working in the hospitality industry while attending college with the hopes of achieving the American dream. As an immigrant, I see it as my responsibility to accomplish my goals and my family's aspirations. I hold an associate's degree in Baking and Pastry Arts and a master's degree in HR Management. In my spare

time, I volunteer as a translator for immigrants who face various challenges in the court system. While I was attending my master's program and studying HR, I wrote extensively about discrimination, a hot topic in the field.

Significance of the Study

The study is aimed at raising awareness by showing owners, operators, and managers, in the hospitality industry how widespread discrimination practices have become in the workplace. I hope to initiate conversations among leaders in the industry and help change the status quo. Denying the fact that discrimination exists can contribute to the demise of the industry. The example of discrimination in the hospitality industry that is most relevant to the present study occurred in the 1990's when the restaurant chain Shoney's had to close its doors because of widespread discrimination practices. The courts awarded the complainants with large sums of money in damages, which crippled the operation, forcing it to shut down indefinitely (West, 1992). This case should serve as an example for owners and operators within the industry, showing them that they are not immune from losing it all. There will be a time when high price lawyers will no longer be able to defend organizations or settle cases of discrimination and make them go away.

The hospitality industry is notorious for having an autocratic style of management whereby power is centered at the top. A history of high turnover continues to plague the industry, as does a general lack of inter-organizational communication, low wages, long hours, and the mistreatment of employees. This dictatorial approach stems from rational choice behavior by which those at the top focus on their wellbeing first while making decisions on behalf of the organization that affect those at the bottom. This status quo has fueled an atmosphere of discontent and widespread discrimination practices that no one

seems to want to address Woods (2002). Furthermore, the industry is known for employing low-skilled workers—often immigrant—who want to better themselves; it is for this reason that many of them accept positions in the industry. Because of their limited options due to language barriers and other reasons, they have no choice but to accept jobs in the industry in order to survive and help their families locally and abroad. These immigrants often acquire experience in the industry and move on to other jobs/positions that offer somewhat higher wages. This creates a revolving door effect in the industry which causes the employees who choose to stay behind to become dissatisfied, as they continue to face issues they are unable to manage (Woods, 2002).

Discriminatory behavior leads to a high turnover rate, particularly when employers continue to ignore the issues and leave them unresolved. There are many forms of employment discrimination that occur in the workplace. As a result of the September 11, 2001 on the United States by radical Muslims, the number of employment discrimination cases based on religion and national origin rose significantly; those numbers are particularly high in states like Florida, Texas, and Louisiana, which are home to many immigrants (U.S. EEOC, 2015).

In the years since September 11, many Muslims have been dismissed from their jobs without proper causes; they have been mistreated and restricted from observing their religion, as required under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Cavico and Mujtaba (2011) point out a variety of cases filed by the EEOC on behalf of employees who complained of unjust treatment following the events of September 11. In 2008 a teenage applicant was refused the opportunity to work because of her hijab, the traditional hair covering worn by Muslim women (Talbot, 2015). As a result, she brought a complaint against the

retailer, which was discriminating based on her appearance; the court ruled on her behalf. The case went on to the Supreme Court, and the decision was the same: the court ruled once again for the plaintiff. Cases like this one serve to illustrate claims from the EEOC that discrimination is prevalent and on the rise (U.S. EEOC, 2015).

This study was designed to answer the following questions: What are the lived experiences of HR professionals in the hospitality industry who have observed recurring patterns of employment discrimination? I am eager to explore this hot button issue and find out how HR professionals manage it within their workplaces. How has this issue affected them over the years? What are their views, how did they feel, and why did they stay in the industry? Although these topics are somewhat sensitive to address, it is important to discuss them openly. Many times individuals who have been discriminated against choose to resign rather than make incendiary remarks that could provoke fear or retaliation from their employers. Human resources professionals are mandated to maintain confidentiality about workplace challenges, especially those that could affect the organization financially and ruin its reputation. Furthermore, this high level of confidentiality also protects the employees of the organization. For example, employees' personal information, salaries, and medical information are protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2015) and should never be divulged. According to the EEOC, retaliation is a form of discrimination that happens in the workplace whereby employees are demoted, harassed, or terminated when they file a discrimination charge against an organization (U.S. EEOC, 2015).

Research Questions

While discrimination is a social construct, there are many different forms of discrimination that occur in the workplace. For instance, Blacks and Hispanics are often treated differently than their White peers, and men and women are regularly treated dissimilarly. Others employees be discriminated against because of their age, body size, physical disabilities, and more. Based on the 2014 and 2015 EEOC reports (U.S. EEOC, 2014, 2015), as well as numerous articles on the subject of discrimination, I designed this study to explore the lived world of HR professionals in the hospitality industry who have dealt with recurring patterns of employment discrimination. This study is guided by one primary research question and subsequent questions that I formulated for my interviews with the participants (see Appendix A).

The EEOC reports (U.S. EEOC, 2015) demonstrate that discriminatory practices are not only rampant in organizations, but also occurring more frequently, as indicated by an increase in the number of complaints filed by employees across organizations. Scholars have reported cases of employment discrimination practices throughout the hospitality industry. For example, Argusa et al. (1998), Davidson et al. (2011), Jenkins (2008), and Pinar et al. (2009) all present cases of discrimination in the industry based on employees' gender, sex, and national origin cases; all of these cases were reported and litigated by the EEOC. In spite of these documented infraction, HR professionals in the industry continue to argue that they do not discriminate whatsoever.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will appear throughout the study; they include some familiar terms, as well as hospitality industry jargon referred to in the literature and by the participants of the study.

Bona Fide Occupational Qualification

Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ) is a practice that exempts employers from being accused of discrimination when a job's requirements are gender specific and not based on race or age. It is legal for an employer to discriminate and be protected by BFOQ when factors like gender are considered necessary qualifications for the job (Noe et al., 2003).

Civil Rights Act of 1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted to eradicate any form of discrimination based on the precepts of Title VII of that act (Noe et al., 2003).

Conflict

Conflict is defined as a struggle between two or more independent parties when resources are scarce and both parties' goals are incompatible; it begins with the two parties interfering with each other's ability to achieve these goals (Folger et. al. 2009). Conflict can be defined as a perceived notion of incompatibility that exists between individuals who are interacting interdependently. Often parties that initially hoped to reach the same goals have a disagreement causes them to clash and engage in conflict. Scholars suggest that conflict is inherent in social relationships and inevitable in any environment where individuals interact.

Denial

Denial is an unconscious defense mechanism that parties engage in to resolve emotional conflict. It refers to a refusal to accept an unpleasant aspect of reality (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2016).

Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when individuals are treated differently because of their race, sex, national origin, and/or religion (Noe et al., 2003). Edmonds (2006) argues that the grounds for discrimination are irrelevant, it is more important to examine the societal features related to the discriminatory act. Discrimination occurs whenever an individual is refused a job based on skin color, age, national origin, size, or gender; it is just and unfair, because it prevents individuals from qualifying for positions because of factors they cannot control.

Disparate Treatment

Disparate treatment is a claim that alleges intentional discrimination based on race or sex. It may occur based on many motives and can occur in the form of blatant action (Heneman et al., 2012).

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was established in the 1960s to ensure that all individuals have an equal opportunity for employment, regardless of their race, age, sex, religion, disability, national origin, color, or creed (Noe et al., 2003).

Guest Service Satisfaction

Guest Service Satisfaction (GSS), is a scoring system based on the number of surveys and ratings a hotel receives at the end of each week. This survey is randomly sent to guests, and the number of responses is tabulated weekly (Marriott International, 2016).

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, age, national origin, sex, color, religion, or creed. It was amended in 1973, 1977, 1990, 1991, and 2009 and addresses the Rehabilitation Act, punitive damages, American with Disabilities, and protection for Fair Pay Act (U.S. EEOC, 2015).

Theories

A theory is a set of interrelated concepts that guide thinking. Theories serve as a vehicle for attempting to explain certain facts. They are used to analyze a set of facts, comparing them to one another. Theories are a series of related propositions composed of attempts to explain ideas by establishing the relationships that exists among them. They serve as explanations of how and why events are happening in the world. Sociological theories, in particular, explain the processes by which human beings behave, interact, and organize themselves in society (Turner, 2003).

Retaliation

Retaliation is a form of discrimination that occurs in the workplace when an employee is harassed, demoted, or terminated and then files a discrimination charge against his or her employer (U.S. EEOC, 2015).

Society of Human Resources Management

The Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) is the professional association that promotes the role of HR as a profession, providing education, certification, and membership. It was founded in 1948 and currently has 285 million members worldwide (Society for Human Resource Management, 2016).

Outline of the Study

This research study is presented in five chapters. In Chapter I, I introduce the background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the research study, and the theoretical perspective that aids in understanding the topic explored in this study. The background of the problem provides the structure for the study, which was designed to examine the lived experiences of HR professionals in the hospitality industry who have observed recurring patterns of employment discrimination. The problem statement captures what is currently known about discrimination practices in the workplace.

The ultimate goal of this study is to raise awareness about employment discrimination in today's organizations and how it could become a hindrance for the industry as a whole. In Chapter II I present a review of the existing literature on the various forms of employment discrimination, which solidifies and highlights that employment discrimination exists and is rampant throughout organizations and across industries. Chapter III includes information about research method and a complete analysis of the data from this study on employment discrimination. In Chapter IV I present the major findings from the study, and in Chapter V I discuss those findings and their implications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine recurring patterns of discrimination in the hospitality industry by capturing the lived experiences of HR professionals in that industry. A total of 16 HR professionals participated in this study; they shared their views and perspectives about their distinct experiences in the hospitality industry. The literature review contained in this chapter serves to frame and enhance the goals of this study. It includes information from a wide variety of articles and books on the subjects of HR, harassment, and discrimination. The main topics addressed in this study are discrimination, harassment, diversity, and the role of HR in the hospitality industry. These key topics aided in my efforts to synthesize the history of discrimination within the hospitality industry with the findings of the present study.

Database Searches, Referenced Articles, Journals, and E-Books

The literature review includes peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, books, and web searches, as well as searches in databases such as ProQuest and EBSCOhost. It also includes information from various ebooks on discrimination that I accessed through the Alvin Sherman Library and purchased online. Throughout the chapter, I reference the works of Kosowski (2012), Rockmore (2012), and Suhendro (2012), and articles were reviewed both as soft and hard copies. The articles I reviewed for this study were written and published between 2005 and 2015.

History of Human Resources

There is a wealth of documented information on the history of HR Management (HRM), and the field continues to experience growth in spite of numerous changes in laws and a need to remain competitive. This function of HRM is vital within any

organization; its responsibilities are to attract, acquire, and retain employees (Noe et al., 2003). The HR department of an organization is also tasked with other functions, such as compensation, benefits, training, and development. As a leader in the workplace, HR has become business savvy by being strategic and highly competitive.

After World War II, personnel departments were tasked with providing training for returning soldiers in need of employment. These departments later came to be known as Human Resources departments; they were tasked with overseeing all the responsibilities that personnel departments once handled, as well as embracing the use of computers (Marciano, 1995).

Human Resource Information systems (HRIS) are an innovated approach that allows HR to be functional and effective. Using HRIS, HR professionals can track recruitment functions, keep track of employee hours, and process payroll in record time (Heneman et al., 2012). Systems like HRIS have allowed HR to be competitive and strategic while managing the bottom line. The role of HR in the workplace has evolved from caretaker to paper pusher to policy and benefits administrator to strategic partner. In order to maintain their role as strategic partners, HR professionals have had to become strategists overnight, managing costs, developing teams, and creating succession-planning programs for their organizations. Human resources professionals are expected to understand budgets and manage their departments efficiently while continuing to prioritize the bottom line. Though many HR organizations in various northern states have remained unionized, most are not.

The work of Barnard, Carnegie Fayol, and Follett (1918-1924), has been influential in establishing management concepts that guide organizations. Furthermore,

the Gilbreth and Gantt's contributions were solely toward to the scientific aspect of management. Barnard, Carnegie, Mayo and Follett placed a large emphasis on the aspect of management; Owen and Munsterberg contributed heavily to the field of human resources management. Later, Drucker (1999) addressed common management issues that organizations faced such as: Lack of skills, performance, and knowledge and discipline issues. Moreover, Peter Drucker introduced the concepts of strategic management that organizations have adopted and is still in use today. Drucker (1999) believed that managers should manage with common sense; managers should be thoughtful and to be good managers to those they lead. Managers should be socially responsible; they should be open-minded and able to understand their subordinates.

Wren and Bedian (2009) emphasize the importance of the imprint that Drucker made on the evolution of HRM. In his book *The Future of Industrial Man* (1942), Drucker conveyed the importance of organizations managing with a purpose in order to succeed and become strategic. Drucker's clients included Ford Company, Sears, and many other household names. His message was clear: Managers should understand that workers are not a commodity; they are people who need to be treated fairly. Drucker also emphasized that management should reflect the community it serves by integrating diversity, being socially responsible, and maintaining a relationship with the community (Wren & Bedian, 2009).

Drucker (1999) believed that HRM must be able to synchronize the power and knowledge of the worker (Wren & Bedian, 2009). Wren and Bedian (1999) generally share Drucker's sentiments about the role of diversity in organizations and endorse the way he introduced HR departments to their new roles as strategic partners by

incorporating diversity and value for its most valuable asset: humans. Throughout the years HR has stopped being considered a paper pusher department and has come to hold a rightful seat at the table within most organizations. Drucker's work continues to influence the way organizations conduct business worldwide.

Human Resource Management has gone global; today, HR departments manage multi-unit locations in every part of the world. Human resources professionals have to be knowledgeable about domestic and foreign law, depending on where the organization's offices are located. The field of HR continues to expand, bringing along added responsibilities. Although the functions of HR have changed over the years, managers have four basic functions in the organization. 1. HR as a change agent is responsible for negotiations, communications, and overcoming resistance to change. 2. As a strategic partner, HR is responsible for making decisions that affect the bottom line. 3. As an administrative expert, HR oversees the flow of information within the organization, as well as legal compliance, contract, and the e-HRM and HR information system. 4. As employee advocate, responsible for counseling and developing the teams within the organization Noe et al. (2003). As a result of this continuous evolution, HR professionals find themselves occupying an important role in their organizations. They are entrusted to provide guidance, lead, and be consulted on important decisions (Marciano, 1995).

In response to changes in financial markets, Ji (2009) explored how the health of an organization correlates with its performance. According to the researcher, the three primary ways in which an organization's health affects its performance is in the survival of the organization, the ways in which HR serves as a buffer in the decline of the

organization, and the process by which HR can be instrumental in revitalizing the organization by saving it from failure (Ji, 2009).

Davidson, McPhail, and Barry (2011) analyzed the evolution of HR, the challenges HR professionals face in the hospitality industry, and the ways in which the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) has assisted in aligning organizational goals within the parameters of the profession. Human Resources Management (HRM) is designed to represent the interests of employees. The expectations of HR professionals have changed—as they are more commonly considered strategic partners within the organization—and they now play a larger role in organizations than ever before. The responsibilities of HR professionals have evolved such that they now manage many functions, including training, managing organizational culture, and cultivating talent at different stages of the growth process. In addition, Davidson et al. (2011) address the human factor, which encompasses individual employee performance, even though the hospitality industry relies on the performance of the overall organization and determines its success based on the quality of service it provides. Training is necessary to ensure that organizations not only meet the basic industry standards, but also exceed guests' expectations.

Davidson et al. (2011) highlight two key factors of organizations in the hospitality industry that complement each other while adding value to the organizations' overall functioning. They describe the human touch as being of great importance for the organization; it is accomplished by managing turnover, providing training, setting standards that the workplace must adhere to, and applying learned principles (Davidson et al., 2011). Davidson et al. (2011) note that when organizations outsource these

functions—as is the case for many organizations in the industry—the return on investment reduces significantly instead of generating profits. With respect to this, the advancement of technology has been both positive and negative. As a result of certain technological advancements, the field of HR has transformed in many ways. Many HR functions that were once performed by employees can now be performed electronically. Many HR departments have become faceless because of technology, and now most HR services can be accessed remotely or through a kiosk (Davidson et al., 2011).

Role of Human Resources

HR professionals are tasked with handling the day-to-day operations of the organization by managing its most important asset: the employees. The structure of the HR office is aligned with the following roles: the manager, the generalist, and the assistant (Stevenson, 2005). The history of HR has been traced back to the 18th Century, when factories hired workers in large numbers and required them to work long hours for little pay (Stevenson, 2005). A great number of HR professionals working in the hospitality industry find themselves dealing with many forms of discrimination within their organizations (Gilbert, Guerrier, & Guy, 1998).

Walker and Hamilton (2011) conducted a study to address the following question: What is the role of Human Resources Professionals in handling employee grievances? According to the researchers, structured organizations should have a process of handling grievances that will give employees a fair chance of bringing their issues forward without fear of retaliation (Walker & Hamilton, 2011). Many organizations utilize their HR professionals less and give more power to managers who have very little knowledge of HR. By not involving HR in the decision making process when it comes to sensitive

issues regarding employees, organizations expose themselves to liability and risks, up to and including charges of discrimination.

Walker and Hamilton (2011) emphasize the lack of credibility in HR departments when they do not get involved in significant employee issues like those involving discrimination. They suggest that the processes utilized by the organizations involved in their study were ineffective, and they propose that HR should be involved at the initial stage of a dispute, not brought in as a last resort. Escalated conflict sometimes results in stalemates or unwanted EEOC charges, so the involvement of HR from the start of the process is highly encouraged.

The role of HRM is to plan, staff, develop, and retain employees. The HR department serves as the link between management, which is aimed at maintaining and managing the human capital of the organization, and employees, which are the most valuable asset of any organization (Henneman, et al., 2012). The objective of the HR department is to maximize the use of its human asset, retaining a good relationship with management while maximizing the development of its employees.

The primary role of HR is to hire qualified and competent candidates with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their jobs and advance the goals of the organization. The main functions of HR can be divided into four areas, outlined in the subsections below.

Employees. In any organization, the employees are the most valuable assets. The HR department is primarily designed to oversee the processes pertaining to the organization's employees.

Performance appraisals. One of the primary responsibilities of HR professions is to measure employee performance and provide rewards to stimulate and motivate employees.

Compensation. Compensation is considered a motivating tool to attract talent in an organization. Within most organizations, HR professionals are responsible for conducting an orientation or onboarding process when new employees are hired. They introduce the employees to policies and procedures, discuss the hours they will be expected to work, explain payroll functions, provide an overview of the programs in place to support employee development, and discuss the expectations of the organization.

Training and development. This is another HR function that provides employees with the skills necessary to do their jobs. It also involves grooming potential leaders for their future in the organization. In most organizations, HR professionals develop, administer, and monitor performance appraisals, which serve as a tool to monitor, pay, promote, and keep track of disciplinary actions within the organization.

The HR department in most organizations is also responsible for managing change, integrating diversity, and maintaining the corporate culture. Additionally, HR participates in negotiating with unions about employee wages and services, resolving conflicts, and responding to grievances. The HR department fulfills a recordkeeping function, maintaining employee files that reflect each employee's history and performance in the organization. It also provides information about wages, promotions, transfers, and lay-offs. Employees can access their files and discuss any issues that may arise.

Performance appraisals serve as a form of feedback used to motivate employees. Many HR professionals serve as a liaison between management and labor unions that represent employees' interests. There is also a career planning function inherent in the role played by HR professionals, as they use strategic approaches geared toward future goals by grooming employees for future opportunities. The HR role has a strategic aspect that is aimed at remaining competitive in the market by managing talent; therefore, compensation programs serve as an important tool and component of strategic HRM.

Compensation programs are aimed at motivating employees to perform at the highest possible level, becoming an asset to the organization and being promoted to higher paying jobs. Employee benefits are another important strategic tool designed to attract talent to an organization; this component is required by labor laws and is offered at the discretion of the employer. The cost of benefits has risen significantly, such that many employees can no longer afford basic medical care for themselves and their families.

Human Resources Management

Within the hospitality industry, HRM has done a poor job managing a system that promotes the humiliation of certain employees by rewarding those who remain silent and go with the flow. From the employee's perspective, this industry relies on mostly female employees, immigrants, and young workers seeking opportunities. Young employees work predominantly in restaurants, hotel front desks, and country clubs. Hospitality jobs are difficult; they require long hours and pay less than jobs in other industries.

Additionally, the stress level is high. From the perspective of management, the industry offers good full-time positions. Although managers work an average of 55 hours per week, they are well compensated, have a variety of positions, receive incentives bonuses,

get to rub shoulders with many people, have pleasant work surroundings, and enjoy many other job perks.

From the employer's perspective, managers are expected to manage their employees, impose policies and procedures, promote the sale of the product and ensure that budget goals are met at the end of each quarter. Employers in the hospitality industry focus solely on providing a service, making a profit, and gaining the competitive advantage by securing their market share (Lee-Ross, 2000).

Because of the high demand of hospitality jobs, employees are not usually motivated to continue delivering services by meeting managers' expectations. Accordingly, the role of HRM in that process is to serve as mediators between managers and employees to meet the needs of both parties and provide encouragement to help facilitate service delivery. The policies and practices of HRM have severely impacted the quality of service in the organization. They have influenced managers' leadership and management style by supporting and shielding bad behaviors. This has influenced organizational culture and the quality of service delivery. This is evidenced by the large numbers of discrimination complaints that continue to cross the EEOC's desk. In general, HRM has yet to do its job by developing a culture in which employees are treated fairly; their approach appears to be patchy and inconsistent, at best (Langlois, 2001).

Another component of strategic HRM is the engagement of professionals in the evaluation of various programs within the organization that are effective and worth maintaining. The HR professionals who carry out this function administer attitude surveys aimed at gathering employees' opinions regarding their work, wages, promotions, working conditions, and benefits. Although most companies value the

opinions of their employees, others simply collect the data and do nothing with it. Others choose not to even conduct these types of surveys, instead spending their time reactively managing recurring issues.

One of the primary responsibilities of an HR professional is to develop corporate culture while managing policies and procedures—to be an agent of change in the organization, give voice to those who do not have a voice, and act as a consultant. This includes becoming a facilitator of change, putting functional strategies in place that correspond with the organization's mission and vision statements. It also involves being a strategist and participating in the formulation of strategies; serving as the liaison between management and employees; assisting in aligning HR strategies with organizational strategies; creating teams that are congruent in values; forming alliances; and aligning people with their work so that the organization's strategies can be achieved. When HR professionals are fulfilling their responsibilities, they identify issues and offer solutions, providing the support employees need throughout by establishing effective programs that work (Ali, 2011).

HRM Conflict

Work-life balance has always been a challenging aspect for management in many organizations, especially in the hospitality industry. Employees in the hospitality industry tend to have no social lives; they work long hours, receive low wages, are not required to have a high skill level, and often have no hope for career improvement and development. These employees are mostly foreigners with limited grasp of the English language. They tend to be stressed out, devalued, and suffer from extreme exhaustion. These employees often remain in the workplace because their choices are limited. Those

who are able to transition either leave the industry or go work for a competitor that places more value on work-life balance. The hospitality and tourism industry is notorious for working employees to the point of burnout, due to their rigid and demanding schedules (Deery, 2008).

Progressive organizations could establish strategies geared at reducing employee burnout, using it as a recruiting tool to attract talent. Work-life balance increases job satisfaction, reduces absenteeism and work-related injuries, and increases employees' commitment to the organization. The hospitality industry should implement strategies that promote employee health by allowing employees to work fewer hours during low season without hindering their budgets. They should schedule adequate staff levels in order to provide days off for those who need them, allow employees to take sufficient breaks during work hours, and minimize overtime. Finally, they should reduce employee workloads by allowing them to do maximum work within a reasonable amount of time and allow them to focus on slow-paced tasks toward the end of the day (Deery, 2008).

By providing manageable schedules for staff members, the industry will contribute to higher production levels and less turnover. The HR sector could become a champion of programs that promote work-life balance by ensuring that certain practices are in place and implemented by managers who are trained to create reasonable work schedules and allow employees to take time off in order to reduce stress and burnout. There are several measures that the industry could utilize by changing the way they conduct business and treat their employees; the return on investment would be beyond their imagination. The hospitality industry in the United States should look at the way newly developed markets in Dubai and other parts of the world have surpassed them by

offering better services at a reasonable cost. These values can be learned and implemented by an industry that thrived in the past and used to hold managers and employees to much higher standards (Deery, 2008).

Much of the existing literature is centered on the current challenges that HR professionals in the hospitality industry are facing and the reasons for it. In the past, HR professionals in the industry were held to a higher standard; when they spoke, leaders in organization listened. Today, HR organizations have taken a different stance that has rendered them ineffective, and they are no longer the voice of reason. They are perceived as pushovers with no backbone who refuse to take into account what their role used to be (Davidson et al., 2010). Currently, HR in the hospitality industry continues to have issues with cultivating skills in the organization and managing generational changes based on their attitudes and expectations. They are incapable of telling upper management what needs to be done in order to promote change, instead finding themselves at a stand-still, unsure where to move.

The HR sector of the hospitality industry needs to take a different approach in dealing with recurring issues that challenge them. They need to perform an evaluation of all organizational functions to ascertain whether or they are suitable and effective. Once they acquire that knowledge, they need to remove the functions that are not working and keep those that continue to make a difference in the organization. The hospitality industry needs to recognize that the present generation seeks instant gratification while holding different values and beliefs than the prior generations. Generally speaking generations Y and Z do not believe in working long hours; they believe in instant gratification and are highly technologically inclined. They believe in multi-tasking and tend to have a difficult

time working with older generations. In order for training to be effective, generational differences must be considered (Davidson, et. al., 2010).

The HR department has the ability to bring issues to the table and offer solutions that will add value to the organization. They can focus on recurring issues and make changes as needed as well as ensure that jobs in the field are improved so that they can more effectively recruit and retain employees in these positions. Furthermore, HR professionals should be able to either manage or eradicate lingering issues by addressing their root causes. They should also provide adequate training to promote culture and responsibility across the board. Effective HR departments promote work-life balance, change job designs and roles, and implement strategies that promote retention. It is important to note that reducing the number of outsourced functions will allow for more employment opportunity. However, owners and operators always think of the bottom line before everything else. To be optimally effective, HR could show that although focusing on the bottom line helps ensure that financial strategies are working, the human element is just as vital to the organization's success. This could provide balance so that the organization profits while applying good business practices.

Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry as a whole encompasses several domains: hotels, restaurants, country clubs, airlines, rental car companies, and transportation companies. Overall, the industry includes any business that provides a service to a customer for a fee. Since the events of September 11, 2001, the industry has changed significantly; what was once the norm is no longer. While recruiting the participants for this study, I realized that some organizations have restructured over time. Some positions used to be managed by

qualified individuals with many years of experience, but today these positions are given to less qualified individuals who work under the supervision of an area manager.

History of Hotels

The first hotels were established around 3000 BCE (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007). In those days, hotels were located in private residences and managed by the homeowners. Later they came to be known as guesthouses and *auberges*. Back then the innkeepers—the equivalent of general operations managers today—did not do a good job with the upkeep of these establishments. The rooms were less than immaculate, they provided a crude meal for their guests, and they demanded their payments in advance (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007).

According to Sandoval-Strausz (2007), the quality of guesthouses improved during the 1700s when traveling was done for pleasure. The first known hotel in the United States, called “The City Hotel,” was built during the late 1700s and early 1800s. In that era, only wealthy individuals could afford to stay at hotels. Since then, however, hotels have become a way of life for travelers and have served as a profitable investment. In the US, for example, the most recognized hotel brands have been Marriott, Hilton, Sheraton, and Holiday Inn. Research has shown that guests will go out of their way to stay at their favorite hotels (Marriott & Brown, 1997). For example, in his book entitled *The Spirit to Serve*, J. W. Marriott highlights how repeat customers will drive an additional 30 minutes to come to a Marriott hotel. *The Spirit to Serve* outlines the core values by which Marriott employees live. These core values make the company and its employees stronger; they remind the employees to apply good judgment, always providing excellent service to guests and representing the brand well. Every day, Marriott

hotel associates repeat the core values at their morning stand- up meetings in every department (Marriott & Brown, 1997). In 2016, the hospitality industry witnessed the largest merger it had seen when the Marriott Corporation acquired Starwood Corporation, one of its largest competitors (Marriott International, 2016). Today, the Marriott Corporation is the largest hotel chain in the world, with a total of 5700 rooms in 110 countries (Marriott International, 2016).

Impact of Terrorism on the Industry

After the events of September 11, the hospitality industry continued to be impacted by threats of terrorism. Fear of further attacks on infrastructure and the need for security have been the primary factors affecting the industry as a result of September 11 attack. After these events the hospitality industry was forced to lay off a large number of employees due to the major decline in domestic and international travel. Hotel security became an imminent concern overnight. Furthermore, the changes in the global economy and related scandals forced the market to collapse. Although the upscale hotel market declined, the Marriott Corporation retained its share of the market because of its reputation and brand effect. The airline industry also experienced major losses, especially those airlines that were directly impacted by the terrorist attack. Distributors such as Haagen-Dazs did not experience any major changes; however, the domino effect was felt throughout the industry (Atkins et al., 2003).

Security continues to be a concern in the minds of travelers throughout the world. Executive leaders in the industry are confident that although security issues can pose problems worldwide, their companies should be able to survive whatever may come so long as they continue to reinforce their structures. System structures are strong, and they

will endure no matter what the circumstances happen to be. The transport sector of the hospitality industry is the most at risk in the event of a security issue; airlines and cruise lines would feel the effects because passengers and guests would need to move from place to place. Although the market has somewhat recovered, the industry continues to thrive by making additional efforts to secure its assets (Atkins et al., 2003).

The Effect of Technology on the Industry

Technology has a significant effect on organizations within the hospitality industry. Smartphones have become a way of life for many people, allowing them to have everything at their fingertips. The use of smartphone technology has prompted many changes in the way small and large business organizations operate. Smartphones allow their owners to pay for services, check in at the airport, and scan their boarding passes, all through a series of simple clicks within phone applications—commonly known as *apps*. In the past, cellular phones were used solely as a method of communication between people, but they have evolved into a way of life. The hospitality industry has had to make changes to allow guests accessing their facilities to continue to use technology. For example, some hotel operators have enabled hotel doors to be accessed through apps so that users can enter their rooms using only their phones. The hospitality industry has become technologically interactive, and changes in technology will continue to dictate how operators conduct business (Vanja et. al., 2015).

Hotels must remain competitive by implementing technology every aspect of business. Organizations that refuses to join the bandwagon will miss out and be unable to remain competitive. For a long time, the hotel sector lagged behind the airlines, which quickly understood the needs of their passengers and implemented new technologies

accordingly. The service industry as a whole must conform overnight to the continuous and innovative changes that continue to take place. The front desk check-in will soon be a thing of the past, as guests will use smartphone apps to go directly to their rooms. Hotels must remain vigilant by protecting their assets from hackers looking for the next opportunity. We have become a different technological world over the last two decades, and we continue to move in that direction for the future (Vanja et. al., 2015).

The hospitality industry is using more technology to maintain the competitive advantage. The evolution of new forms of lodging and the new advancements in technology that are utilized in the industry call for a reassessment of the way business is conducted. Guests now have more choices at their fingertips. With the push of a button they can use websites to access multiple hotels, in addition to bed-and-breakfasts and other forms of lodging. These changes will continue as our society becomes more dependent on technology.

Community partnership is another approach that organizations can use to secure qualified individuals. Krell (2012) addresses an important issue that most organizations have been ignoring for years: the ability to partner with local communities and colleges in order to maximize employee training. Since 2009, unemployment rates have been high, and there has been a mass exodus from the workforce (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). There has been an ongoing trend of workers relocating to other areas with the hope of finding employment. Krell (2012) has shown that partnering at all levels pays off, especially when the skill gap has led to the favoring of foreign workers in the US who can meet the technical demands of the job. In order to have an integrated workforce, Krell (2012) proposes that people with criminal records should be reintegrated

into the workforce and young people should be hired more readily. The researcher emphasizes that companies should partner with their local communities and offer efficient training programs that could become beneficial for the employers, the community, and the government. Higher rates of employment are associated with reduced crime rates, a boosted economy, and lower rates of incarceration Krell (2012).

Lee (2012) addresses the benefits of hiring highly skilled HR professionals versus less skilled professionals. According to Lee, having skilled professionals in an organization, both locally and globally, allows the organization to compete equally and reap financial rewards. Lee (2012) suggested that there is a need to hire manpower utilizing new and innovated approaches that meet the needs of the financial sector is necessary to ensure that qualified applicants are performing at the levels established by the organization. Financial institutions are in need of highly trained professionals who can understand the business while possessing the necessary skills to address global needs. Many organizations no longer invest in their employees' education. For example, the hospitality industry believes in hiring less skilled people by giving them enough training to meet the organization's needs. However, HR professionals are experiencing a high rate of turnover within organizations, which is attributed to the hiring of less qualified workers. As Lee (2012) emphasizes, there is a need for the funding, education, and training of students who can join the workforce, and incentives such as free housing should be made available to attract and secure talented employees.

Reilly (2012) discusses the future of HR it expands globally. Because HR has had to change its modus operandi to meet the needs of global organizations, its organizational cultures, values, and beliefs have been impacted (Reilly, 2012). For example, companies

like McDonalds, Starbucks, and others have embraced globalization and shifted the way they conduct business as well as their HR practices. Global companies must ensure that their managing staff is adequately skilled and trained, as well as culturally informed about the new culture they are about to embrace. For example, some companies have introduced culture training for managers who want to work overseas (Reilly, 2012).

Forster (2011) notes the importance of cultural training in organizations that are conducting business worldwide. Organizations such as the Society of Human Resources, along with local universities, have introduced courses and material that introduces people to the global aspects of HR. Through these courses, HR professionals can educate themselves and prepare for the local challenges of the country in which their organizations conduct business. HR professionals who attend these courses learn about the differences in the local labor laws of these countries, which differ from those in the United States. For instance, HR professionals in Africa are not subjected to the same labor laws as those in Europe, South America, or other parts of the world.

Another important point raised by Forster (2011) is that in many organizations, the role of HR is changing. For instance, HR is more regularly being outsourced instead of remaining a part of the organization, as it has been in the past. The author notes that outsourcing HR functions such as payroll and employee benefits is a financial strategy that has been favorable for the organizations that have done it (Forster, 2011). This form of outsourcing allows organizations to balance their budgets and reduce labor costs while remaining efficient and cost effective. Functions such as benefits enrollment have been outsourced over the past two decades. Employees are now required to go to a website and

enroll themselves; should they encounter any issues during the process, the company provides a telephone number for assistance.

Many organizations, such as hotels and small companies, have utilized outsourced services for the past 10 years. Hotel organizations have adopted this model and transferred the functions of HR to departmental managers responsible for hiring, coaching, counseling, and training their employees. Other HR professionals see the process as impersonal and have expressed concerns about the future of HR. Outsourcing has proven to be cost effective for employers in charge of managing the bottom line. Employers have evolved from having a large HR department to maintaining a one-person department that provides immediate service and directs employees to complete other functions online or via telephone. The cost savings in this process are attractive from a financial perspective. The outsourcing of HR tasks has been occurring since the 1990s, and the Internet has made it even more prevalent. Training is conducted via webinars, allowing managers to access training material from their desks using only a telephone access code. This interactive process is not only cost effective, but also convenient; entire organizations can meet without leaving the comfort of their offices, reducing the number of travel nights per year.

Friedman (2007) addresses the seldom discussed subject of globalization and expansion, exploring what happens when the culture in countries that organizations operate in hold values that are incongruent with those in the United States. The researcher asserts that the concept of good business practice being universally is nothing but a myth. He goes on to emphasize that organizations operating globally must be cognizant that cookie cutter practices will not work, no matter how much organizations want to believe

it will. Multinational companies can cause havoc by introducing policies and procedures that make sense within the United States but may not be appropriate when operating in somewhere like Saudi Arabia, for example. Moreover, organizations must educate employees working overseas that U.S.-based policies do not work everywhere, and the laws of the host country supersede those of the United States.

As a current employee and resident of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I was asked during my pre-employment process whether I was aware of and in agreement with the culture of the country. Organizations must inform their new hires about the culture of the country and the expectations upon being hired. Employees who are uninformed have a difficult time operating in other countries. Other multinational companies struggle to conduct business in places where child labor is common. Although in some countries the government has allowed multinational companies to use best common practices, in other cases, the transporting of goods has been blocked by local resistance groups intent on sabotaging production (Lamarque, 2016) and openly voicing their dislike for companies such as Apple, Nike, and others that have factories in China, India, and elsewhere.

Discrimination in the Workplace

Nunez-Smith et al. (2009) notes that practicing physicians who are ethnic minorities in the United States experience racial and/or ethnic discrimination in the workplace. This research asserts that discriminatory practices have no bounds and are not limited to certain disciplines or professions. The researchers focused on physicians of African, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino heritage who have experienced discrimination in the workplace (Nunez-Smith et al., 2009). Most of the respondents were male, between the ages of 50-59, and reported experiencing personal discrimination. The study's results

show that discrimination in the workplace is widespread and not limited to age or profession (Nunez-Smith et al., 2009). Workplace discrimination is difficult to prove, as the claims are based on the perception of those who believed they have been discriminated against. Racism is sometimes confused with discrimination; it is the responsibility of the HR department to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to eradicate discriminatory practices. The healthcare field is highly in demand, and healthcare professionals sacrifice countless personal hours and work time to assist others in times of need.

Racial Discrimination

Couch and Fairlie (2010) analyzed a practice adopted by some organizations after the financial crisis of 2009. This process is utilized in food operations to shift products and guarantee freshness to the consumer. These two systems, FIFO—first in, first out—and LIFO—last in, last out—are utilized to shelve merchandise in order to retain freshness. Organizations have applied a similar system in times of crisis to terminate employees they have been trying to let go of without just cause. This practice is blatantly discriminatory. During the financial crisis of 2009, statistics from the Department of Labor revealed a nationwide unemployment rate of 8.3%; one year later, the rate rose to 9.3% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Many employers took advantage of the financial crisis as an opportunity to terminate employees they would otherwise have been unable to fire.

According to Couch and Fairlie (2010), the rate of unemployment is relatively higher for Black Americans than White Americans. From 2009 to 2013 it did not matter whether an employee was skilled or unskilled; many lost their jobs without justifiable

explanation. The statistics on the employment gap do not address the most important factor: discrimination. Using the FIFO or LIFO model with human workers was a way to exploit the downturn of the economy and cite financial hardship as a reason to discriminate against a particular group of employees.

Discrimination Based on Weight or Age

Mishra and Mishra (2015) examined the rapid growth of age and weight discrimination in the workforce. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, any employee over the age of 40 is in a protected class and cannot be discriminated against. Unlike race and age, weight is not classified under Title VII. However, many cases have been brought to court citing Title VII in which the defendant must prove beyond reasonable doubt that he or she was discriminated against based on weight and body size. According to Mishra and Mishra, since 2008 the numbers of complaints filed with the EEOC has risen, revealing the prevalence of discrimination based on weight and body size. Employers who have been charged with weight-based discrimination have claimed that overweight employees cause a hazard for the workplace; they can get sick easily, their healthcare costs about 18% more; their life insurance and workers compensation rates tend to be higher, and they pose a general risk to the organization (Mishra & Mishra, 2008). In addition, obese workers are less productive, costing the operation money (Centers for Disease Control, 2003). According to the American Society for Bariatric Surgery (2016), obese employees can qualify for bariatric surgery as long as they meet the insurance requirement of being morbidly obese. Using workers' weight loss programs and their health insurance, obese workers can have a procedure that will

aid in their weight loss (American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, 2016; Obesity Coverage, 2016).

Some employers can get away with not hiring overweight workers. For example, airlines operate based on the weight of passengers, cargo, and employees; therefore, they are supported by BFOQ, which makes it legal to refuse jobs to overweight people in the hiring and retention process; however, this could still be a form of discrimination.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 45 million Americans are obese, health care costs have risen since 1998 (Centers for Disease Control, 2003).

According to the Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), employers are prohibited from discriminating against an employee or applicant based on age (Heneman et al., 2012). Some organizations have been able to get away with discriminating against older workers. They use the layoff system to terminate older employees and then hire younger employees whom they can pay less and who can multi-task more effectively (Mishra & Mishra, 2015).

Religious Discrimination

Ghumman, Ryan, Barclay, and Markel (2013) analyzed the rise of religious discrimination in the last decade and recommended future research aimed at exploring religious discrimination. The word *discrimination* means difference in treatment.

Christianity is the most common religion among Americans, followed by Judaism, Islam, and Catholicism. Following the terror attack in New York on September 11 and the more recent attacks in France; Belgium; San Bernardino, CA; and Orlando, FL, religious based discrimination is on the rise (Arnett, 2014).

Muslims in the United States live in fear because they pay the price for those who have chosen to commit acts of violence, falsely claiming to do so in the name of Islam. According to Ghumman et al. (2013), there was a sudden rise in religious-based discrimination after the September 11, 2001, with Muslims being beaten in the streets after attending Fajar or Isha prayers. Mosques have been set on fire and desecrated not for fear of the religion, but for fear of those who practice it, even though the religion seldom has anything to do with the violence committed in its name. Disparate treatment, retaliation, and religious harassment have become hot topics in the workplace, and every time there is an attack, Muslim employees find themselves at odds with the rest of the organization (Ghumman et al., 2013). Muslim applicants and employees have filed suits citing harassment by managers, unjust termination, or refusal of employment based on their names (e.g., Muhammad).

Religious discrimination is real, and it is not going away any time soon. Ghumman et al. (2013) note that employers can cite BFOQ to refrain from hiring people of different beliefs. For example, a Muslim professor may not be hired at a Catholic school because of differences in prayer rituals. Women who wear a hijab, for example, may be prohibited from publicly representing a business out of fear of retaliation and customer boycott. Many employers who chose to remain diverse have received backlash because of their refusal to practice covert discrimination.

Malos (2009) explains that as a result of the September 11 attacks, Muslim and Arab Americans have seen their world turned upside-down in the workplace. The anger, paranoia, and frustration of those directly affected and emotionally touched by the attacks have unleashed anger and hatred against this minority group. These sentiments have no

doubt infiltrated the workplace, where Muslim and Arab Americans are commonly let go without explanation because of their national origin and religious affiliation. After September 11, there were many complaints of discrimination filed by Arab-Americans (Kelly, 2008).

In an exploration of recent court cases citing discrimination, Malos (2009) reveals that workplace discrimination is widespread and difficult to prove. In *The City of Houston v. Ibrahim*, a firing manager told others within the organization that his firing of Ibrahim was due to his national origin; in other words, he was fired for being Arab. Unfortunately, the employee whom he told refused to testify to the alleged conversation, making Ibrahim's case difficult to prove beyond reasonable doubt (Malos, 2009).

The Case of El Sayed is another example of flagrant discrimination practices by managers that were difficult to prove in the court of law. Employers shield themselves behind the high priced lawyers who vigorously defend them in court. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, employers are obligated to accommodate requests based on religious belief; however, many employers refuse to abide by the law, citing the needs of the business as their reason for doing so (Kelly, 2008). The sudden rise in workplace discrimination has been accompanied by a rise in discrimination cases filed with the EEOC, the only policing body that ensures the private sector is in abidance with the law. Discrimination is detrimental to organizations, ultimately affecting the bottom line. Kelly (2008) notes that it has been over 10 years since the September 11 events, yet Muslim Americans continue to receive backlash because of renewed anger over the horrific display of violence by Islamic State Terror groups; the recent shooting at Pulse night club by a man of Arab ancestry served to further incite this anger. The attack of two teenagers

after Fajr prayer—the first prayer for Muslims—outside a mosque in New York was also called an act of terrorism. This cycle of violence shows that there is ongoing anger about the events of 2001 and a great deal of misdirected anger toward people who had nothing to do with them (Mozingo, Pearce, & Wilkinson, 2016).

There are many factors that tend to influence religious discrimination. For example, the recent arrival of Syrian refugees has provoked fear, because many of the refugees are Muslim (Jordan, 2016). The United States Constitution prohibits religious discussions in the workplace, and the separation of church and state forbids the recitation of prayer in public schools. Contrastingly, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia religion is everywhere. During prayer time, retail stores must close their doors in observance. The country's national airline includes a small place of worship in each aircraft for passengers needing to pray while in flight.

Religion and spirituality have been a great concern in modern society (Harrington, Preziosi, & Gooden, 2001). Employees in the United States do not tend to speak openly about their faith, and they are often prohibited from promoting religious events in the workplace. A claim to be spiritual gives the impression of non-religiosity, often sparking heated discussion, especially among those who may not fully understand both perspectives. It is discouraged to share religious beliefs in the workplace, and those who do so are frowned upon by managers and often counseled by HR. Although spirituality and religion are referred to interchangeably, they are different in nature and meaning (Burgess, 1996).

Harrington et al. (2001) define spirituality in the workplace as the inner value of the worker; it is the energy that they generate while attempting to add meaning and value

in their lives. According to Harrington et al., spiritual people see themselves as an asset by adding value beyond their work, bringing their experience and energy to the workplace (2001). Their focus is not on money, but rather on the value they add to the workplace and the bonds they form beyond the confines of the organization. Based on these findings, Harrington et al. (2001) believe that religious diversity is a trend in society, as well as within organization, and should be protected.

Sexual Harassment

Like discrimination based on race, age, national origin, color and creed, sexual harassment is also a discriminatory practice, especially when it happens in the workplace (Chia-Jeng & Kleiner, 2001). Sexual harassment was previously defined as any form of unwanted advance, either verbal, written, or photographic (Noe et al., 2003). It is a form of discriminatory practice perpetrated by one or several leaders within an organization. It often begins with a compliment or distasteful joke made by a supervisor or manager. It is done to show power and is a form of unfair treatment. Employees are encouraged to report this behavior, but many do not out of fear of retaliation. Employers must have a policy of zero tolerance as a means of discouraging the behavior.

Sexual harassment can be detrimental in any organization. To prevent it, HR professionals must provide training for managers, supervisors, and employees to raise awareness of the issue. There are no provisions under Title VII to protect against sexual harassment; however, charges can be brought to court with the help of substantial records of the unfolding events. Perpetrators often bully their victims to the point that they are uncomfortable being in the same room with them, and the situation becomes degrading and embarrassing. The recommended courses of action for counteracting the behavior

include reporting incidents to supervisors, managers, and/or HR representatives; taking copious notes to document the behavior; ensuring that the perpetrators are being investigated by the organization; and if the situation progresses outside of the workplace, taking legal action so that the perpetrator is prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Any employee—male, female, young, or old—can be a victim of sexual harassment.

Gender-Based Discrimination

Baum (2013) analyzed the challenges that female employees face in the hospitality and tourism industry, including the lack of equality and promotion, the attitude of HR toward discriminatory practices, and the strategies organizations are implementing to either manage or eradicate these practices. It has been noted that the industry designs jobs solely for women, while others are more favorable to men. Within the hospitality industry, power is centered at the top, policies are expected to be respected and followed, and communication must be verified by the people in power prior to being disseminated. The decisions made at the top only benefit those involved, which fosters horizontal segregation whereby certain sectors employ more women than men. Although there are far more men in leadership positions than women, there are women occupying some managerial functions in the industry (Baum, 2013).

Continuing efforts have been made to ensure the equal treatment of women in the hospitality industry in various sectors; however, women continue to receive less pay than their male counterparts in the same position with similar or less education. Kogovsek & Kogovsek (2010) did not identify any ways to tackle this issue, which leaves the reader with more questions than answers. It must be noted that systems are an extension

of society, and since those at the top have not applied any value to this issue, it continues to occur without anyone offering concrete solutions (Kogovsek & Kogovsek, 2010).

Transgender Discrimination

According to Bailey (2013, 2014), LGBTQ advocates are fighting equality rights in court because transgender discrimination is on the rise in U.S. organizations. This subject is both political and social. In the past, people who identified as transgender remained anonymous, fearing rejection and discrimination. However, since November 2014, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which prohibits workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, was passed by both Houses of Congress and supported by the President. This shows the support that exists on behalf of transgender Americans. According Bailey (2013, 2014), transgender individuals of color are the most vulnerable to discrimination.

There are many questions that arise when considering the rights of transgender employees, including which bathrooms they should use and what, if any, dress code should be enforced for them. Failure to be sensitive to these issues could be considered discrimination. One significant side effect of discrimination is unemployment. When a particular group of individuals is discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, it is difficult for them to secure employment. Unemployed people tend to be unhappy and misunderstood based on preconceived notions; this can result in social issues and violence.

The passing of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) increased the protection for these disadvantaged groups but failed to rise to the level of Title VII (Transgender Law and Policy Institute, 2016). Transgender bias is real; however, until it

can be held up in court under Title VII, individuals being discriminated against will have a hard time proving their cases.

Disguised Discrimination

Fazio (2011) argues that downsizing is another tool used by organizations to practice discrimination, although it is often justified through claims of financial hardship. According to the author, today's organizations engage in practices that their HR representatives disagree with; these employees are then faced with the task of performing activities such as masking layoffs to cover up discrimination. This is one of many issues that HR professionals disagree with and find dissatisfying. Furthermore, Fazio adds that although HR professionals are familiar with involuntary terminations, they still have difficulty understanding the phenomenon of mass layoffs.

Human resources professionals understand the nature of the job and the responsibilities they have to carry out; this allows them to remain confident, professional, and aware of the needs of the business. Fazio (2011) emphasizes that some level of conflict exists between HR representatives and management during the process of mass lay-off, as the massive change it incites affects the lives and careers of all current employees. The author adds that the financial crisis of 2009 affected many U.S. citizens. Everyone either knew someone who had been laid off or was affected personally. The adverse effects of the financial crisis were particularly damaging when the downturn of the economy was used as a vehicle to discriminate against employees who otherwise would not have been terminated (Fazio, 2011).

Discrimination Against Expatriates

According to Domagalski (2008), employment discrimination can be prevalent in any organization; American citizens working overseas are not exempt from it. The author explains that American citizens working overseas for American companies and their auxiliaries are protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights of 1964. American employees working for foreign governments are suing for discrimination at higher rates; however, one thing these workers fail to realize is that the foreign companies they are suing are not obligated to abide by American laws such as Title VII unless they have such clauses in their own employment laws that allow employees to file charges of discrimination.

Most American employees working for foreign governments must be aware of the country's labor laws before accepting positions with companies that operate under them. It is important to note that countries operating under Sharia law, where women must have a male sign for them, were not mentioned in Domagalski's (2008) study. Under these circumstances, women who are American citizens must be cognizant of these laws when accepting positions in these countries (Domagalski, 2008). One example provided by the author is, Sabic a Saudi Arabian company that has a subsidiary operating in Houston, TX. In Saudi Arabia, Sabic does not hire women; however, it is unable to make a similar statement in the Houston location, because doing so would violate Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Therefore, the company and has no ground to claim Bona Fide Occupational Qualifications in Texas and must abide by the U.S. laws in place (Domagalski, 2008).

A Case of Perceived Discrimination

Kunce and Meyer (2014) introduced the case of an employee who claimed to have been discriminated against by her employer because of age and disability. The

organization gave this employee an audience, only to later tell her that her case of unfair treatment would not be investigated. She was reassigned to a new team and passed for a promotion, despite claiming that she should have been promoted. There are many employees in past and current organizations like the one in Kuncce and Meyer's. Sometimes they choose not to report the discrimination and instead resign to prevent retaliation.

Kuncce and Meyer (2014) note that employers tend to apply retaliatory tactics to discourage employees from pursuing valid cases of discrimination. They use justification labels to defend their positions and decisions, at times turning a blind eye to blatant discrimination as a way to discourage employees from furthering their claims. The hospitality industry is notorious for these practices. When employees file charges, they must prove their claims based on facts, not perceptions or feelings. There may be many employees like the one in this case who can no longer handle the malfeasance of their superiors and the pressure from their coworkers; they become discouraged to the point of resignation, satisfying the managers who were knowingly pushing them out.

Factors That Influence Discrimination.

Vasconcelos (2015) identified five factors that influence discrimination in the workplace: moral, organizational injustice, corporate social responsibility, non-spiritual business orientation, and unethical leadership. Using these five factors, Vasconcelos identified the ways in which discrimination affects individual lives. According to the researcher, in some organizations, managers deliberately discriminate against older workers by favoring younger workers. He explains that in some cases, discrimination is embedded in the minds of the people in charge who make up the decision-making body

of the organization. He addresses the process by which discriminatory practices can be detected in appraisals, compensation, training, promotions, and work conditions.

Although the study is centered on incidents and instances that occurred in Brazil, Vasconcelos's examples mirror many instances that exist in organizations everywhere.

Vasconcelos (2015) suggests that in organizations in which the people in power are careless and unethical, morale is low to non-existent. The HR departments in these organizations fail to understand that directly addressing the issue of discrimination would improve organizational morale, and employees would be less resistant and more open to the vital roles they could assume within and outside the organization. According to the researcher, organization leaders who are unethical set aside their morals when making managerial decisions. These leaders lack good judgment, fail to recognize the issue at hand, practice social injustice, resist new ideas that could aid in changing the status quo, and are unable to embrace diversity (Vasconcelos, 2015). The ability to integrate the five factors proposed by Vasconcelos can aid any organization in which discrimination is taking place. If the organization starts by analyzing its internal issues, it can create a process that will allow it to instill change, step by step.

Promotion Discrimination Based on Size

Randle, Mathis, and Cates (2012) explain that while discrimination in the workplace was once most commonly based on age, race, national origin, and appearance, it is now often based on weight and body size. The researchers analyzed this form of discrimination that has increased significantly in U.S. organizations, exploring how it impacts employers and employees. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits

discrimination based on age, race, and national origin, discrimination based on weight or body size is not covered (Randle et al., 2012).

According to a study conducted by the United States National Center for Health Statistics (2016) reports, a large number of U.S. citizens are above average weight. In the study, the researchers highlighted cases in which overweight employees failed to receive promotions or be given certain assignments due to their size. Furthermore, they identified a disparity in the compensation of obese and non-obese employees. Perception is reality, so when this practice is recognized among employees throughout the organization, it prompts frustration and feelings of being less than, which are not healthy for the overweight employee or the organization as a whole (Randle et al., 2012). The most flagrant case of weight discrimination, which made news headlines, involved an applicant who claimed to have been discriminated against because of her weight. Per her report, she received an email notification from the recruiters in which they discussed her weight and stated that she was not a fit for their organization.

Discrimination Across Disciplines and Income Brackets

According to Coombs and King (2005), discrimination is not limited to certain types of professions or income brackets. The researchers surveyed approximately two thousand practicing physicians in Massachusetts to determine if and how they had experienced workplace discrimination (Coombs & King, 2005). Discrimination tends to be subjective, so it is challenging for people claiming to have been discriminated against to substantiate their findings, because their allegations are often solely based on their perspectives (Combs & King, 2005). This study shows that discrimination is not limited to lower income brackets or education levels.

Combs and King (2005) assert that ethnicity and gender biases exist in schools, and many medical facilities employ a large majority of foreign-born physicians. Although medicine is a highly respected field, a great deal of foreign-born physicians argue that they have been discriminated against at one point or another in their careers. This clearly demonstrates that there are no boundaries when it comes to discrimination in the workplace (Combs & King, 2005). The U.S. population has become more diverse over the years with the influx of immigrants arriving in search of the American dream. As a result, discrimination will continue to be a challenge, compounded by the fact that nobody wants to be forthcoming and address the real issues. The number of discrimination charges filed annually is on the rise. It will remain the largest unspoken issue in our boardrooms, classrooms, and admissions and employment offices until it is no longer ignored and swept under the rug.

Diversity Challenges

Smith and Joseph (2010) conducted a qualitative study to explore the lived experiences of 42 African American and Caucasian men and women in corporate America who either sustained or witnessed discrimination and stereotyping in the workplace. The researchers examined the challenges that organizations continue to face in an attempt to manage diversity and asserted that a high level of discrimination and stereotyping exists in corporate America, which has a profound effect on both men and women across racial lines (Smith & Joseph, 2010). They note, however, that men and women experience discrimination and social isolation in the workplace differently. The findings from this study reflect the need for true diversity in organizations, starting from the top down. When organizations become more diverse, they experience fewer

challenges in retaining talent. Managers need to practice what they preach across levels of power.

Kravitz (2008) investigated the role of diversity as it pertains to affirmative action by addressing the following questions: Does discrimination still occur? What is the economic impact of affirmative action on target groups? What is the economic impact on organizations? Does affirmative action lead to stigmatization of target group members by others? Does affirmative action lead to self-stigmatization by target group members? In his responses, the researcher proposes that yes, these issues do impact applicants as well as organizations, and affirmative action procedures do not usually yield the most qualified applicants. Target groups sometimes refrain from applying for certain positions out of fear that they will never be selected. Kravitz explains that many organizations invest in costly organization-wide diversity training, for employees however these trainings do not produce the type of results they seem to desire.

Reeves, McKinney, and Azam (2012) introduce the implications of diversity strategies that organizations must consider with regard to women who want to wear hijab—a traditional headscarf in certain Middle Eastern cultures—in the workplace. In non-Muslim countries, women who want to wear their headscarves encounter discrimination and rejection in the workplace because their employers do not want to project the image that they are tolerant of Middle Eastern cultures. In Muslim countries, it is customary for women to cover their hair when they are in public. However, in the United States, as in some other countries, employers are afraid to hire anyone who may make a negative impact on their organization. A handful of employers have allowed women of Middle Eastern ancestry to wear their headscarves at work without fearing

public opinion or boycotts of their operations. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on national origin and religion as well as race, age, gender, color, and creed.

The participants in Reeves et al.'s study (2012) study expressed fear and prejudice. They reported that their Muslim identity caused them to be labeled a certain way by many Westerners, who perceive the hijab as a symbol of the oppression of women rather than as a head cover that shows humility and humbleness. Furthermore, it has been perceived by the participants in Reeve's (2012) study that an applicant wearing a hijab should not be hired because guests may feel uneasy talking to her at the desk. According to the manager, the woman's presence would turn away return guests, which could translate to a loss of revenue for the hotel (Reeves, McKinney, & Azam, 2012). The themes that emerged from Reeves et al.'s study show that a woman's decision to wear a hijab can have adverse consequences, limiting her ability to be gainfully employed. The researchers conclude with a call for organizations to increase diversity by being strategic in their practices.

Martin-Alcazar, Romero-Fernandez, and Sanchez-Gardy (2011) conducted a study to identify how diversity can be managed utilizing specific operandi within the realm of HR. The results of the study reveal that current diversity approaches in organizations are not successful. It is important to understand that diversity is something to be managed vigorously, not handled from afar. According to the researchers, group synergy and HR engagement are instrumental for the success of the diversity program in any organization. They add that leaders need to realize how much diversity affects an organization's functions. Until attitudes change, the status quo will remain. There are

many misconceptions about hiring for diversity. Some organizational leaders believe that hiring people who represent the genetic makeup of the community is diverse enough; however, it is not enough to claim the organization is fully diverse. Martin-Alcazar et al. emphasize that the practices currently in place currently do not work. There is a need for a relationship between diversity and group performance, since affirmative action laws are perceived to be non-effective and unfair by people who are not affected by them. The researchers state that demographics play a vital role in establishing diversity programs that will aid in the management of groups and sub-groups in communities where diversity does not exist.

Milbourn (2012) stated that older employees with seniority in a company tend to be set in their ways. A number of researchers have identified a relationship between stress level and job dissatisfaction. Milbourn (2012), for example, proposed a process by which job stress could be reduced by first organizations establishing clear lines of authority, having employees report to only one supervisor, distributing responsibility equally and in accordance with authority level, and clearly defining employees' tasks and goals. This would be a dream come true for most organizations; realistically, however, the average employee currently performs the responsibilities of 1.5 employees, which results in poor performance, low rates of satisfaction, and high levels of job stress.

Hospitality HR professionals play an important role in their organizations: They are the first line of defense. An employee's initial encounters with HR can determine whether he or she will remain with the company or go find another job elsewhere, usually in search of better pay. The existing literature on the hospitality industry points to the significance of addressing the main question guiding the present study: What are the

lived experiences of HR professionals in the hospitality industry who have observed recurring patterns of discrimination?

Theoretical Perspective

Bureaucracy theory, rational choice theory, power theory, critical theory, system theory, and constructionist theories were used to support this research Clegg (2001).

These theories offer explanations for why the workplace is a breeding ground for conflict. I chose them to frame the research with the goal of better understanding why these issues continue to happen. I will begin by explaining each theory individually, concluding with the constructionist framework.

Bureaucracy Theory

Bureaucracy theory was first formulated by Max Weber (1947) to help define the modern structure of the organization as a segment of broader society based on six principles of governance. Weber addresses structures within systems and the way they function, categorizing each system as having a separate set of responsibilities governed by rules. According to Weber, actors are individuals who move within these systems with the authority to delegate tasks to subordinates, which must be accomplished within a reasonable amount of time based on certain instructions and the needs of the system. Within the concept of bureaucracy lie the concepts of leadership, authority power, and control within systems. Hall (1963) and Harris (2007) show that systems must be organized so that tasks get accomplished and the actors within the systems have a clear sense of direction and can manage their tasks effectively. Weber's theory influenced the development of what is known today as the organizational chart.

Ritzer (1996, 1998) expresses concern with the concept of bureaucracy as a form of protectionist system. This autocratic style of management cages those at the top, and power is only allocated to a selected few. This exclusivity in relationship could promote groupthink, posing a danger to society because all the power is concentrated at the top. Although some believe that systems are becoming more open and thus need to be more autonomous, it is important to maintain structure and control within systems but not to the extent that the leaders become so powerful that they considered themselves above the rules and regulations, creating an oppressive workplace.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory was formulated through the work of James S. Coleman; it was further developed through the efforts of Adam Smith (1974) and other scholars who heavily contributed to its evolution (Ritzer, 2004). Rational choice theory implies that people act the way they act because they have a purpose and goal to achieve. Actors in systems behave the way they do because of scarcity in resources or lack of opportunities within those systems.

Rational choice theory is aimed at explaining why human beings act the way they do. It explains the reasons behind behaviors that increase the chances of actors attaining what they need and want and being satisfied. The theory explains human behavior as it pertains to reward and recognition. It describes why people do what they do based on the situations that they face. For example, the theory posits that actors take action based on the consequences they may face if they choose to behave otherwise. This theory is relevant to the present study because it explains the position of the HR professionals vis-à-vis the employees who complained of discriminatory practices.

Power Theory

Power theory represents Foucault's social theory of power and knowledge. The concept of power is instilled in the structural aspect of the world as it pertains to relationships within systems. According to Lemert (2004), power can be seen as a necessary force that can change, strengthen, or weaken systems as well as those engaged in conflict. There are numerous ways in which power can be demonstrated:

1. Power can be derived from many aspects.
2. Power can be seen as a casual relationship that can be predominant.
3. Power can arise from the lower levels of the system.
4. Power can be seen as a force that promotes strategies and tactics in systems.
5. Power within a system can be seen as a form of authority, prompting resistance (Foucault, 1977).

The management and organization theories of the 1950s were not founded on the notion of power; however, in the 1960's, through the works of Crozier (1964) and Mintzberg (1983), the notion of power was introduced, as many actors in systems began taking advantage of their fellow actors, gaining the competitive advantage by unethical means. To prevent this behavior from happening in the future, systems adopted certain structures as a way to manage and regulate actors, keeping them from taking advantage of each other. These views were adopted on a large scale in the 1980s.

Critical Theory

Critical theory provides explanations about modern social conditions. It developed as a nuance of Marxist/Weber theory focused on the rationalization of the modern world, and contains concepts from various schools of thoughts. Critical theory

focuses on how actors in social systems think and, and how social events influence their thoughts and behaviors. It aids in identifying and informing about social issues that people face in the systems in which they are evolving. When applied, it offers an in depth view of what is happening within any structure, yielding information that the ordinary person would not be able to see. It examines the structure of the organization and society as a whole.

Human resources professionals in the hospitality industry face many issues that affect the bottom line. These issues include turnover, job dissatisfaction, and discrimination. In addition to these recurring issues, burnout is one of the most damaging workplace issues that seems to go unnoticed. Malasch et al. (2001) point out that employees suffering from burnout—usually as a result of demanding physical conditions—are less productive, more anxious, more depressed, and more physically stressed. However, it often goes undetected and untreated.

Santhanam et. al. (2014) states that there is a direct relationship between rates of turnover and HR practices in the organization. The hospitality industry depends on the relationships their employees build with customers. Human resources plays a vital role in the organization, in spite of the role shift it has experienced in recent years. The industry has outsourced many HR functions by entrusting them to line managers. This shift could be the source of the many issues the industry is facing. Industry leaders and operators must be able to understand the messages that are being sent by the revolving door of employees.

Critical theory enables the identification of the underlying messages that people communicate in their speech and actions. The underlying messages communicated within

the hospitality industry naturally raise the question of why turnover is occurring at such high rates. The industry should respond by taking certain measures to listen to the underlying messages in their system and change the way HR communicates with employees. Human resources could retain its initial function as the employees' champion, because the employees in the system are necessary for the system's functioning. Albattat et al. (2014) assert that HR needs to identify the internal and external factors that contribute to turnover. Furthermore, organizations must change their working conditions, provide training, and increase wages; these changes could be significant, creating a new way for HR to hire and retain talent.

Diversity in the industry is another factor that has also contributed to turnover, discrimination, and other challenges currently faced by HR professionals. Although diversity can serve as a tool for improving workplace conditions, there is little available knowledge about the effect of diversity on minority employees within organizations. Smith and Joseph (2011) suggest that in order to understand workplace issues, the workforce must be diversified. Critical offers a framework for identifying social conditions by addressing social oppression; it describes human beings as the authors of their own destiny. Within the critical theory framework, industry culture is viewed as a superstructure that functions under false pretenses and is oppressive in nature. Critical theory addresses a variety of issues that the modern world continues to face, such as discrimination, feminism, sexism, colonialism, the monopoly of labor, and other factors that allow capitalism to reign by controlling the lower class. Critical theory plays a vital role in systems, as society as a whole is comprised of systems within which actors play various roles that affect each other's lives.

Systems Theory

Systems theory emphasizes the importance of systems in the world, their level of interaction, and the degree to which they are interdependent on each other. This theory focuses on the ability to understand the relationships that exist within systems and how complicated these relationships are. For example, the organization is a system in which actors function as sub-systems and interact with each other within the confines of their offices within a much larger systems. They interact among themselves and with vendors, clients/guests, and employees. However, the dynamic of the organization operates as an extension of society's interactions, reflecting its beliefs and values. Interactions within the system continue to take place while actors mingle with other systems in the outside world at various levels. Figure 1 shows the interaction of HR within an organizational system and the importance of the relationships within systems.

Systems theory emerged from a variety of disciplines. Talcott Parsons (1950-60) has been one of the most influential figure in the development of this theory, along with Wilfredo Pareto and Margaret Meade. The theory shares a variety of nuances with other theories, including rationale choice theory and postmodern organization theory. According to Parson, every social system has subsystems that interact among themselves. For example, a hotel is a large system composed of sub-systems, also known as departments. Within these departments/sub-systems are actors in charge and subordinates who report to them. When actors/subordinates navigate inside a system, they depend on each sub-system to accomplish the overall goal of the organization. The hotel focuses on exceeding the needs of each guest; the housekeeping department must work with the front desk, the restaurant, and the kitchen to accomplish that goal. If one of these sub-

systems fails to meet the need of the customer, the repercussions will not reflect on the sub-system that failed, but on the system as a whole.

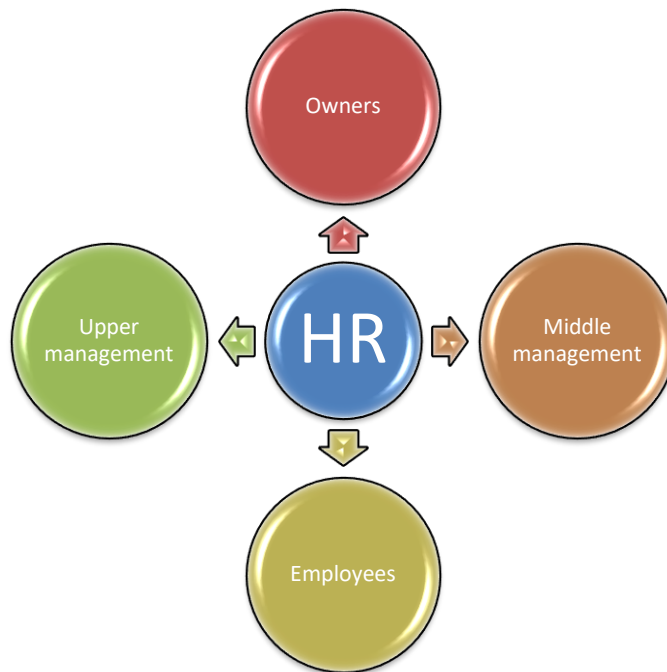


Figure 1. Interaction of HR Within an Organizational System

According to Ritzer and Goodman (2004), systems theory can be applied at various levels of the social world. It offers varied views of relationships and offers a perspective that encompasses all aspects of a cultural system. It is applicable in both small and large organizations. Furthermore, the relationship that exists with the system and the sub-systems within it is important to the overall success of that system. When an HR professional receives a complaint about the front desk, for example, he or she hears the complainant's side of the story and then asks the lead front desk staff to assist in investigating the issue at hand. Harris (2006) states that HR play the role of mediator, as reflected in Figure 1, to facilitate communication between parts of the system. This role is very important, because organizational relationships are complex, and HR cannot show bias.

Systems theory offers an understanding of the interconnectedness of human relationships and the various units that make up larger systems like organizations. The view of the world held by this theory is one of continuous change (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). In order, to better understand systems within organizational structures, there are two vital factors that must be considered: the culture and the structure. Organizational cultures are the shared values, philosophies, beliefs, and norms that dictate how members of a system behave. Structure refers to the process by which tasks are accomplished. Managers apply measures of control in order to achieve results. For example, the hospitality industry system practices an autocratic style of management, in which absolute power is held at the top. Within that system, actors in the various tiers of the organization have to comply with the rules and demands set by those in power or face consequences. The individuals in power at the top become corrupted and tend to cover for each other. Although power is essential in organizations managed by humans, it should be established to provide clarity and order within systems.

Constructionist Theory

Social constructionist theory suggests that human beings construct their truth based on their social lives. This means that society is the production of human creativity and experiences. Social construction is a unique way to describe people's lived worlds, which are made up of their exposures, interactions, and status in society. This theory can be attributed to Berger and Luckman (1967); it was later popularized by the works of Burr (1995). According to social constructionist theory, meaning cannot be described as objective, but it cannot be described subjectively either (Humphrey, 1993). Instead, knowledge is created by those in society as they interpret it in their own ways.

Guba and Lincoln (1993) define constructionism as process of making a single object real. For example, when we see an object such as that which we know as a tree, we say that it *is* a tree; we assign meaning to the tree. This is how we make sense of and construct a great deal of our reality (Crotty, 1998). The meaning we make of objects is part of a reasonable pattern that is connected. This understanding is like a bond shared by many people who are interconnected. For example, people are interconnected because they have a single point of connection. Employees within an organization are interconnected because they work for the same organization. College students also share that bond of interconnectedness because they attend the same school.

We tend to accept the world that we experience even before we personally experience it. Social constructionist theory claims that everything we hold as true is based on construction. Discrimination is a social construct that has become a reality in society. Because of their ability to construct meanings out of their personal truths, individuals have the capacity to determine what works for them and what is not acceptable. Experiences are sources of information that can only be drawn upon by the individuals who lived them. For example, within any system, individuals experience things differently from each other. We construct our own reality based on our personal experiences. For example, one person can express love for an environment that another person regards with distaste. This is because they have had different experiences of that environment or similar ones and have thus derived different meanings. Social constructionism plays a vital role in our lives; we make observations based on our perceptions, which are continually changing based on our beliefs and values.

Kosko (1993) expresses that the bond formed between a researcher and his or her participants tends to yield valuable data. Moreover, the social aspect of social constructionism encompasses the process by which objects are assigned meaning. Therefore, the difference between physical and social phenomena is that one has an independent existence, and the other does not. Therefore, our realities are constructed in large part by our observations (Guba & Lincoln, 2013). For the purposes of this study, social constructionist theory will aid in understanding the experiences of employees belonging to minority groups who are being treated unjustly and unfairly.

Summary

In this chapter I reviewed the existing literature on discrimination in industries across the board, including the hospitality industry. I presented a general point of view about discrimination and its relationship with organizational conflict. The themes from the literature that pertain most to the present study include racial and ethnic discrimination; discrimination based on age appearance, religion, sex, and gender identity; lack of promotion due to weight and body size; and other factors that influence discriminatory practices in the workplace. The chapter concluded with an overview of the theoretical perspectives that are relevant to this study. In Chapter III, I present a detailed account of the methodology guiding this study.

Chapter 3: Method

In this chapter, I address the core of the research. I introduce the rationale for the study by presenting supportive literature on various research approaches to explain why the method used in this study was selected. This chapter includes an explanation of the research design, an overview of the participants chosen to take part in the study, and the instruments used for the study. It also addresses the data collection, preparation, and analysis processes. At the end of the chapter, I present the limitations of the study.

Introduction and Rationale

I chose to use a qualitative design to explore the lived experiences of HR professionals in the hospitality industry who have experienced employment discrimination. I wanted to conduct this study because my father experienced employment discrimination as a foreigner working to make a living in the U.S. I also personally experienced employment discrimination in the hospitality industry as an HR practitioner. My experiences led me to become curious about how such a powerful industry like that of HR can positively or adversely affect people's lives. I wanted to begin by exploring the EEOC reports from 2014 and 2015, which clearly indicate discrimination within the industry. My overall aim was to use the study's findings as a way to propel change by starting conversations with leaders in the industry.

It is my hope that this study will serve as a tool for better understanding the effect of discrimination on people and organizations. The study could prompt an exploration of the role that HR can play within organizations as a change agent and visionary that will lead the company to reach its goals while ensuring that its most valuable asset is taken care of efficiently and effectively. The conversations I had with the participants who took

part in the study were guided by a questionnaire designed to help me gather rich information during our interviews. The semi-structured interview style I used allowed me to record my conversations with the participants, which I later transcribed. To achieve my intended goals, I let the participants know that I worked as a practitioner in the field of HR and hold extensive knowledge about the hospitality industry. I created a questionnaire that was simple and easy to understand and was mindful about the way I conducted the interviews. I allowed my participants to talk freely and practiced active listening, paying close attention to what they said and how they said it. Whenever I was unsure about something, I followed up with participants, asking them to clarify for me what they meant.

I recorded the interviews and transcribed each one, listening several times and, at times, rewinding several times to ensure that I captured everything each participant said. I analyzed each transcript individually by eliminating non-relevant information and focusing solely on the information that pertains to this study. When analyzing the data, I looked for information that appeared consistently across interviews, including words, emotions, comments, or references made by the participants. I grouped this information into categories that I later transformed into themes. I read the interview transcripts a few times to ensure that no passages were omitted. During that process, I combined some of the categories and consolidated some of the codes to ensure that categories were congruent with the meaning attributed to them (Kvale, 1996).

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research provides a forum for people and populations in need of a voice. It is most appropriate for studying topics that are under-researched. This type of research empowers participants to tell their story, as the

results of qualitative studies are presented without judgment. Qualitative research helps generate an understanding of participants' lived experiences by capturing their unique voices (Creswell, 2007). According to Kvale (1996), qualitative researchers are like miners or travelers seeking knowledge through their interpretations of the information participants share.

Creswell (2007) outlines five primary approaches for qualitative research, each of which has unique features appropriate for various research topics. I chose the narrative qualitative approach for this particular study after exploring the case study, grounded theory and phenomenology approaches and determining that they were not suitable for the topic of this particular study.

In designing this study, I included myself as an instrument/participant of the research. The researcher plays an important role in qualitative research, and it was important for me to address my bias based on my personal experiences related to the topic of the study. I was interviewed by someone else who used the same questionnaire I administered to the other participants. This allowed me to understand the interview process and have a sense of what it feels like to be interviewed as a participant of the study.

Since I was once a practicing HR professional in one of the counties included in this study, I am aware of a variety of issues in the field in general, as well as in particular organizations within the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach. I also belong to a local HR association and know many of its members. I have either worked with or resided near many of the participants in the study. As an interviewer, I had to

understand that many of the participants in the study knew me only in the context of my former role as the HR Director at a hotel property.

Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interview style developed by Kvale (2007) helps generate an understanding of participants' perceptions, offering meaning by illustrating what occurs in their lived experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that qualitative research should focus on meaning and process rather than on quantity. Qualitative research focus on the interpretation, discovery, and insight gained from an exploration of participants' unique experiences. It is aimed at delving into new worlds, filtered through each participant's unique lens (Kvale, 2007).

The qualitative interview is a conversation between two people that is established to accomplish a goal. In this study, my interviews with participants were guided by a questionnaire designed to obtain information about participants' lived experiences. According to Kvale (2007), qualitative interviews should be geared toward building something positive—for instance, changing a current social issue or enhancing the lives of others. Moreover, they should serve as a vehicle for exploring the worlds of the people being studied through their activities, perceptions, and opinions.

I created and conducted this study using the seven steps outlined by Kvale (1996), which are intended to serve as a recipe that researchers can follow meticulously and that can be duplicated by anyone wanting to replicate a particular study. Because of my interest in exploring the lived experiences of HR professionals in the hospitality industry, I was attracted to the unique approach proposed by Kvale. It allowed me to engage in

dialogue that produced rich information about participants, showing how they construct the world around them.

The first of Kvale's (1996) seven steps addresses the purpose—or the *what* and *why*—of the study. This particular study stemmed from my own curiosity about employment discrimination. I had an idea of what it was, as my father had experienced it, but I wanted to know why it happens. I also wanted to understand how others experience and feel about it. Kvale explains that in the first step, the researcher also considers the types of interview questions that will help him or her accomplish the goals of the study. The researcher also addresses the theoretical perspectives that will aid in understanding the phenomenon being researched and answering the primary research questions.

In this study, I wanted to find out what others felt when they were faced with discrimination in the workplace. Furthermore, I wanted to understand the reason discrimination occurs in the first place. To accomplish this, I set out to make contact with HR professionals, as they manage human assets in organizations and are, therefore, well positioned to help answer the question of why discrimination happens. According to Kvale (1996), interviews can serve as investigative tools to gather empirical or theoretical knowledge about a phenomenon.

The second step, which is the designing stage, helps clarify what the study will look like. The primary purpose of this step is to determine the most appropriate methodological approach for the study. There are many considerations in this step, and the researcher must consider the best way to find out the information he or she is seeking. The study design (e.g., experiment, interviews, etc.) and instruments (e.g., questionnaire, survey, etc.) are determined during this step. The researcher develops an elaborate plan to

consider what the final study will look like and what the various steps are that will make it possible. For the purpose of this study, I decided to conduct a qualitative research using semi-structured interviews guided by an original questionnaire that I designed.

I took on the role of participant in order to refine the instrument I used to collect data for the study. In order to focus on a specific group of individuals, I used purposeful sampling to recruit participants by contacting all of the hotels in the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach. I employed the snowballing technique, by which I invited the initial participants to refer their colleagues to participate in the study. Other considerations in the second step (Kvale, 1996) include how much work should be done at each stage of the research process, as well as what the ultimate goal of the study is. Researchers engaging in this step should aim to foresee the unexpected and clarify issues at the door outset in order to minimize surprises later. The researcher needs to be alert and able to recognize emergent issues.

The third step pertains to the interview process (Kvale, 1996). The goal of qualitative interviews is to focus on the participants' lived experiences. The goal of the present study was to extract rich information from the interviews by finding out about HR professionals' experiences with employment discrimination from their own personal perspectives. According to Kvale, researchers should design interviews based on the particular phenomenon and participants being studied. In this step, researchers also consider the number of participants to include in the study. Kvale asserts that the number of participants should be determined based on the study's purpose. If there are too few participants, it is not possible to generalize the results; however, if there are too many

participants, it is not possible to make concrete interpretations of the interviews. Within this context, quality is considered more important than quantity.

To conduct a good qualitative interview, a researcher should have expertise in the subject as well as the ability to communicate well with human beings (Kvale, 1996). When I worked as an HR professional, one of my duties was to interview job applicants. This made it easier for me to conduct and carry out the interviews for this study. In the third of Kvale's (1996) steps, the researcher also determines when and when not to interview, based on considerations such as the appropriate method and the purpose of the investigation. In this study, I used simple research questions that were easy to understand. Whenever a participant's response was unclear, I asked for clarification to verify that I was understanding the content accurately. The intention behind my interview questions was to extract rich information that would aid me in developing a better understanding of the phenomenon and propelling change.

The fourth step outlined by Kvale (1996) involves the transcription of data from oral to written. For the present study, this process involved listening to the audio recording of each interview and writing what the participant said about his or her experiences. Kvale states that during this process, two approaches could be used depending on the context of the analysis: (1) condensing the statements and transcribing the general impression of each statement, or (2) transcribing the interviews verbatim. For this study, I transcribed the interviews verbatim.

The fifth step, which is the analysis process, involves structuring the interviews and sorting out information that is not directly related to the research phenomenon (Kvale, 1996). In this step, the researcher clarifies the information collected during the

interviews and attributes meaning to the participants' responses to interview questions. This process often involves listening to the recording of the interviews to be sure that viable details are not overlooked. For this study, I transcribed the interviews, set aside the information that is not relevant to the phenomenon, and focused on the relevant information I collected from my interviews with the participants. I analyzed each transcript using the same method. I then condensed and grouped this information into categories that yielded emergent themes.

In the sixth step, the researcher addresses consistency and ensures that participants' responses to interview questions are reflected in the transcriptions. According to Kvale (1996), this verification is done so that the findings reflect the answers provided by the participants; it is important for researchers to complete this step to prevent the insertion of their personal perspectives and opinions in the study's findings. For this study, I reported what I recorded. I engaged in this step, attending to the validity of the study and addressing my personal ethics. This quality control check was viable to the integrity of the study, ensuring that the information I collected is reflected accurately in the findings.

According to Kvale (1996), the seventh step involves the researcher not only reporting what was found, but also presenting the knowledge that he or she gained during the interview process. Because the researcher learns a great deal from the participants through this process, Kvale likens this step to the researcher being a traveler who observes, recognizes and embraces what he or she experienced during his or her trip. This step allows the researcher to talk about the experience of conducting the research and what he or she learned about him or herself in the research process. The researcher

describes the process, the environment, and the relevant insights he or she gained from the experience.

Sampling and Recruitment

I engaged in purposeful sampling to recruit participants that could offer rich information about the topic of the study (Emmel, 2013; Patton, 1990). According to Creswell (2007), purposeful sampling allows the researcher to have intimate access into the world of the particular group of individuals being studied. Purposeful sampling is often used in qualitative style studies because the participants must have an understanding of the subject matter being investigated. Through the sampling process, the researcher can gather rich information from the participants that will aid in the exploration of the phenomenon (Ritchie et al., 2003). Furthermore, Emmel (2013) notes that purposeful sampling enables the researcher to illustrate the complexity of the phenomenon through the lens of the participants' personal experiences.

In addition to using purposive sampling to recruit participants, I also employed a technique known as chain sampling, through which I invited participants to recruit their colleagues to take part in the study. This was the most effective means of securing participants for the study. Morgan (2008) and Salganik et al. (2004) point out that there are some advantages and disadvantages to this process. One advantage is that participants will actively recruit other participants, which does not cost the researcher anything. The primary disadvantage of this approach is that it can produce inaccurate results, bias, and groupthink, whereby participants can guide and control the types of responses given by the friends, family members, or colleagues they recruit. Bias occurring as a result of chain sampling could corrupt the quality of the data collected by

the researcher. I attempted to safeguard against this by the asking the participants not to influence the people they referred and to withhold from sharing their responses to interview questions. I also explained to the participants that since each person's experience is unique, they should allow their colleagues to participate freely and refrain from telling them what to say.

The geographical location I considered for recruiting potential participants was the tri-county area of South Florida that encompasses Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties (See Figure 2). I made efforts to ensure that participants represented all three counties. My goal was to recruit participants who work in the hospitality industry as generalists, managers, directors, and Vice Presidents of HR. To recruit such participants, I drafted an informational letter detailing the purpose and nature of the study, which I emailed to all of the hotels in the tri-county area. I identified potential participants by reaching out to the local Hospitality Human Resources Association associations in each of the three counties.

I was granted permission by the Nova Southeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study, and all participants signed an IRB approved consent form. Once participants consented to take part in the study, I conducted interviews with them in a variety of locations, based on their personal preferences. These locations included hotel restaurants or meeting rooms, private residences, and offices. In some cases I conducted the interviews over the phone due to geographical constraints. I asked follow-up questions and obtained consent signatures via email due to the same constraints. However, most of my interactions with participants took place in person while I was on summer break in the U.S.

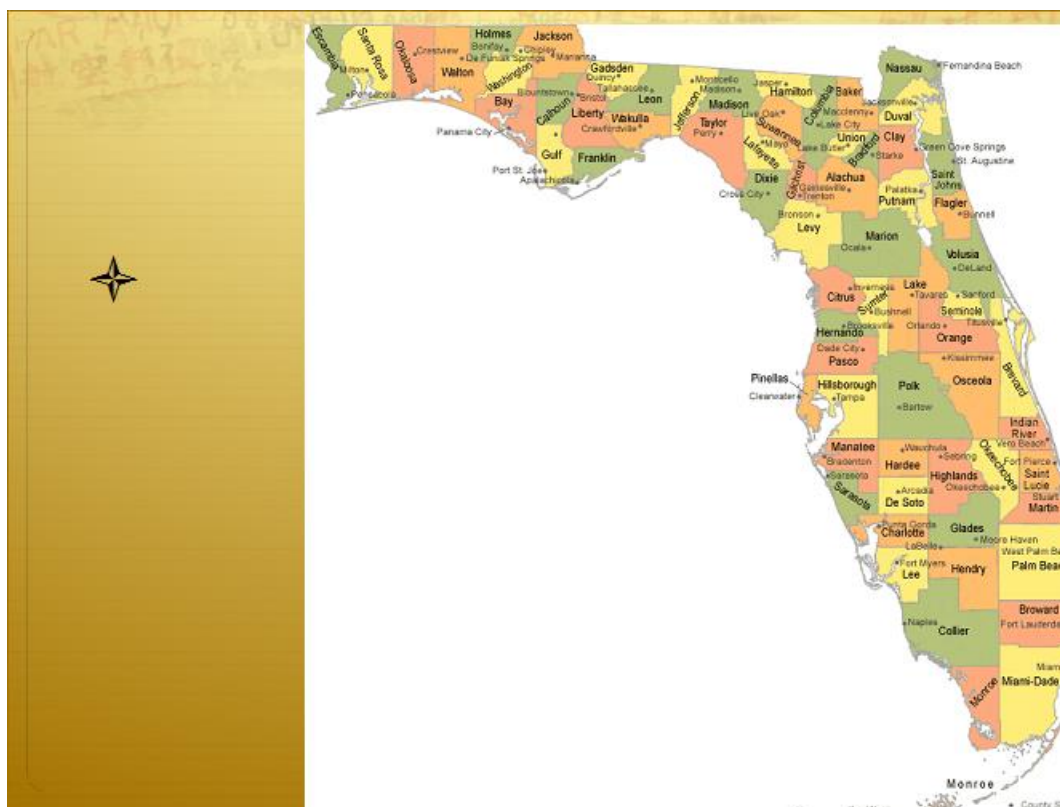


Figure 2. Map of the State of Florida

Participants

The goal of my sampling efforts was to recruit individuals with working knowledge of HR who have been employed in the field for at least five years. The HR professionals who took part in the study were individuals who currently work in hotels or other another domain of the hospitality industry. The majority of the participants were female, which is reflective of the majority-female hospitality industry.

The professionals who participated in the study have either worked in the hospitality industry in various capacities and were later promoted HR Director or Vice President positions. Some of the participants began working in front desk, concierge, housekeeping, or management positions, and others started off as assistants in the HR

office. A couple of participants worked in the corporate office and later transitioned to the property level as managers.

I interviewed 17 participants, but one of them did not meet the criteria for participation, so I deleted the information from that interview. The findings of the study include data collected from 16 participants. Fifteen of the participants are currently employed in the hospitality field; one participant worked in the field for 10 years but no longer does. Table 1 reflects the demographic information of the 16 individuals who took part in the study.

Participant Demographics

The criteria I established for participation in the study included years of experience, race, and job position. The participants held positions including generalist, manager, director, and Vice President of HR. Their years of experience ranged from five to over 20 years. They ranged in age from 27 to over 50 years old. The majority of the participants were seasoned professionals; a few had between 10 and 15 years of experience. Many of the participants held a bachelor's degree in a variety of fields; four respondents held a master's degree. In addition, most participants were fluent in two or more languages. They shared with me that diversity is important to them because of the community they serve; therefore, they see their ability to speak multiple languages as one of the most valuable skills they possess. Table 1 shows the participants' demographics in terms of race, years of experience, and county of employment.

Table 1.

Participant Demographics

Name	Race	Years of Experience	County of Employment
Marwah	Black	10	Broward
Moudhi	Hispanic	12	Broward
Safa	Black	20	Palm Beach
Maya	White	10	Broward
Zahra	Hispanic	20 +	Palm Beach
Ayat	Hispanic	5	Broward
Fatimah	White	20 +	Palm Beach
Wallah	White	10	Dade
Rifa	White	20	Dade
Nada	White	11	Dade
Lamiya	White	10	Broward
Sheefa	White	15	Dade
Maram	Hispanic	10	Palm Beach
Rashida	Hispanic	20+	Broward
Bashayer	White	20 +	Broward
Ruqyah	Black	20 +	Broward

Instrumentation

Chenail (2009) purports that interviewing the investigator is a viable tool that serves to manage the researcher's bias and add rigor to the instrumentation. Being

interviewed for this study allowed me to understand what it means to participate in a research study. It also allowed me to understand how the participants might feel when being interviewed. In essence, becoming an interviewee helped me understand the role of the participant in the research study.

I conducted semi-structured, in depth, face-to-face interviews with the participants at a time and location of their choosing. The semi-structured interview style allowed the participants to be at ease and have control over the type of responses they gave. The goal of qualitative research interviews is to understand the participants' lived experiences, unwrap the meaning of those experiences, and uncover information about their world prior to participating in the study (Kvale, 1996).

The interviews involved sitting down with the participants at their chosen locations and having a normal conversation with them, with the exception of the interview questions I asked to guide the process. My goal was to capture what these participants have seen, what they have done, and what kinds of interactions they have had with others. I asked about what a typical day is like for them in the world of HR.

It was important for me to discuss with the participants the potential bias I might have as the researcher. I let them know that I am an immigrant from the island nation of Haiti, and after completing my bachelor's degree in hospitality management, I was hired as an HR assistant at a hotel in Broward County, where I worked for a period of one year. The following year, I accepted my first management position at a window company, where I worked for two and a half years. In 2007, I rejoined the hospitality industry because I wanted to work in the field that I studied in college. In August of 2007, I was laid off unexpectedly, and my duties were transferred to the accounting department. The

only explanation I was given was that the organization—based on the size of hotel and the number of employees—could no longer justify my salary.

In December of 2007, I accepted a position at another hotel, where I worked for one year and two months. When the stock market crashed in 2009 I was laid off. This time my unemployment lasted three years and three months; for no apparent reason, I could not secure another position in the industry. Six months after I was laid off, an HR manager of Hispanic descent filled my former position at the hotel. In May of 2012, I was hired at another hotel; one year later, I was told that my services were no longer needed and was laid off again. After my departure, a younger White female with less experience filled my position. It was critical for me to consider my experiences in the field in order to manage my potential to be biased as the researcher of this study.

I was able to conduct most of my interviews with participants when I was visiting the U.S. over the summer. Those participants whom I was unable to interview in person agreed to conduct our interviews over the phone. I followed the same protocol with them, explaining the purpose of the study and covering the details regarding the storage of data and the protection of their privacy and confidentiality. Many participants expressed concerns about someone being able to identify them as a participant in the research; I explained to them that I would secure their identities and maintain their anonymity. The participants who refused to participate stated that the topic of the study is not a good one to research, because HR professionals do not like to discuss discrimination.

Researcher's Role and Responsibilities

As the primary investigator in this research study, I had various responsibilities and commitments to the participants. I had to be honest with them, and ensure that they

did not feel I was forcing them to participate. I had to gain their confidence by reassuring them that the no information could be traced back to them, should someone in the field access the study several years later. I asked them not to divulge their participation to anyone, and I answered all their questions to the best of my ability. My goal was to produce a study that would add value to the field; however, I made the safety, privacy, and confidentiality of the participants my top priority. I made myself available to the participants during and after the interview process. They can still contact me by phone or email should they have additional questions or concerns.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and privacy are of great importance to this study. Individuals who have access to privileged information or industry standards could easily identify the participants by the information they shared for the study. In order to prevent this from happening, I explained the potential risks of the study in the consent letter signed by the participants. In addition, I took measures to secure the study data until it can be properly discarded. The participants have been assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their true identities. My goal was to ensure that no participants would be put in a position that could cause harm to their livelihood, profession, or personal lives. Presenting the informed consent was the first step in ensuring that confidentiality was a top priority in the process.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process involved several steps, which included deciding on an interview location, date and time; going from hotel establishment to hotel establishment to introduce myself to potential participants; and collecting data-rich information during

the process. Despite my familiarity with the field, I found it challenging to find individuals willing to participate. This period was stressful, because I encountered more rejection than willingness from the HR professionals I contacted. I was successful in recruiting participants by sending out an information letter detailing the scope and purpose of the study and using the snowballing technique.

Creswell (2007) asserts that researchers must ensure that all potential participants give consent before taking part in the study. I had all of the participants in this study complete the IRB approved consent form (Appendix B) before I interviewed them about their experiences and challenges in their current and past hotel positions. The consent form is a document that details the purpose and goals of the study, the scope of the study, the rights of participants, and the background and responsibility of the researcher during and after the study. The main emphasis of this document is to inform participants about what they are agreeing to and ensure that they understand the process is totally voluntary. It also explains to them that they can change their minds even after deciding to participate. It informs participants that should they decide to leave the study for any reason, I can still use the data I collected, and it outlines the length of time that the data will be retained, as well as the process by which it will be destroyed.

As stated by Creswell (2007) and other scholars, the primary purpose of the informed consent document is twofold. Although it entails the rights of the participants and the scope of the research, it also highlights the benefits of participating. The informed consent statement stresses that participation in the study is voluntary. All of the participants in this study had an opportunity to read and sign the informed consent document. This is an important step in the process, as it ensures that participants are fully

informed of what their participation entails and what they can expect from taking part in the study. I provided each participant with a copy of the consent form and kept a copy for my records.

Creswell (2007) states that data can be collected from various sources as the researcher develops protocols for the study. Qualitative research uses the interview process as a means of generating rich information from the participants' perspectives. I was able to recruit 16 individuals to participate in the study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with them, which offered me more flexibility than a structured interview and allowed the participants to answer the questions with ease, as though they were engaging in a conversation instead of an interview. The interviewed ranged from 45 to 60 minutes; however, many of my conversations with participants continued for another 20 minutes after the completion of the questionnaire. I recorded the interviews and took some handwritten notes for my own use. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), naturalistic, qualitative, social researchers have the ability to collect data in a variety of ways that include listening to, talking to, and observing the participants.

Recording and Storage of Data

According to Creswell (2007), protocols must be in place for the data recording process, to ensure that the researcher is able to take notes during the process. This helps the researcher remain organized throughout the process. I used a recording device and uploaded the audio files for transcription. I transcribed the recordings using headphones to safeguard the privacy of the participants (Creswell, 2007). I used MAXQDA12® to aid me in characterizing and sifting through the data, coding, and generating themes to capture viable information that yielded the findings. I secured all recorded data for the

study in a locked cabinet and password-protected computer, which will remain in my private residence for 36 months following the completion of the study. I will destroy the data after that time by deleting and shredding all documentation.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the data, I analyzed and categorized it into emergent themes and pattern using data analysis techniques outlined by Kvale (1996). I separated each interview text into sentences or recurring thoughts and comments. I color coded recurrent thoughts and later collated them to show that a pattern exists. To ensure that all recurrences were collated and none were omitted, I performed a second level of analysis. The first level of analysis showed that all the HR professionals who participated in the study had either investigated claims or gathered information for EEOC charges; other participants had collected information and investigated claims that did not rise to the level of inquiry from the EEOC.

During the analysis, I used the memoing technique to set aside my thoughts and rearrange them into common topics. One of the issues that resurfaced over and over yielded the following finding: The participants all experienced feeling burdened when they had to investigate claims of discrimination. They expressed a belief that individuals who file discrimination claims do so because they are disgruntled, and that HR does not discriminate whatsoever. Many of them professed love for the employees of their respective companies and explained that they want to make a difference in the lives of others. They expressed love their communities and a desire to empower them so that young adults will seek careers in hospitality. The participants in the study explained that they love their jobs and enjoy rubbing shoulders with the elite guests who come to their

hotels. They also expressed concerns about the future of HR and the emergence of companies like Airbnb, which pose a threat to the hotel industry. They discussed their thoughts about the impact that technology will have on the future of the industry.

Other thoughts such as the inability to recruit qualified employees surfaced during my interviews with the participants. The majority of them expressed that they love their jobs and want to make a difference in the lives of their employees. These thoughts resonated with me, and I noted them during my analysis and coding procedures. Although it was not openly stated, by any of the participants, it was evident that HR professionals are appreciative of their employees as long as they follow the rules and remain silent.

The themes that emerged from my analysis included: 1) the activities of HR; 2) the role these professionals play in their organizations; 3) the relationship that exists between HR and the employees; and 4) the relationship that exists between management and employees. The HR professionals I interviewed were saying one thing while acting in contradiction to what they said. I reviewed the data several times to ensure that there were no coding errors or oversights. I derived the following five themes from what the participants expressed during our interviews: 1) love for the job; 2) love for making a difference in the lives of others; 3) burden of handling discrimination claims; 4) disgruntled employees; 5) no discrimination.

The themes that emerged from my analysis differed from what I read in the existing literature and what I understand about cases that have been litigated by the EEOC. Accordingly, I conducted another literature review on the subject of discrimination in the industry to assist me in understanding these emergent themes and

what they meant for the research. I will discuss these findings and my interpretation of the emergent themes in Chapter IV.

Ethics, Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

Ethics are an important consideration when conducting research. It is the responsibility of the researcher to safeguard the identities of participants in the study. An interview is a dialogue between two individuals that is bound by rules of ethics. Attending to ethical issues in the interview process is often the most challenging aspect of the research process, as several significant issues can arise (Mauthner, 2002).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Eisner (1991) identify common factors that could assist in maintaining internal validity in qualitative research. The quality control processes they outline are necessary in order to ensure the sanctity of the research after the data has been collected. They include eliminating researcher bias, checking transferability of the data, ensuring dependability, and maintaining an audit trail. This form of quality control ensures that participants are in agreement with the data collected by the researcher and reported in the study's findings. I secured an audit trail of the recorded interviews and transcribed data, and aimed to ensure the trustworthiness of all the data I collected through the research process.

Field Issues

My experiences as an HR professional guided me during the research process. It helped me understand the role of the hotel HR professional and consider the potential for my bias in the process. Fielding and Fielding (1986) propose that the researcher must abide by certain guidelines and document everything that is meaningful to the study. In this study, participants may have held back valuable information about cases of

discrimination that are either ongoing or have happened in the past. Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggest that by performing certain checks and ensuring the verification of data, the researcher can help reduce bias in the process, on the part of both the participants and the researcher.

The data I collected for this study is specific to topic being researched; it only reflects the experiences of the population that was purposely selected in the specific geographical location of the tri-county area of Southeast Florida including Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach. The findings of the study do not reflect the attitudes of all HR professionals in the hospitality industry or the entire state of Florida.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of HR professionals in the hospitality industry, to find out about how they have dealt with employment discrimination. This chapter described the method by which the study was conducted and introduced some of the findings that will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. In Chapter IV, I discuss the findings along with some of the comments expressed by the participants.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Presentation

In Chapter III, I presented the methodology for this study. In this chapter, I will report the findings that resulted from my analysis of the data. This study was guided by the following research question: What are the lived experiences of HR professionals in the hospitality industry who have observed employment discrimination? The participant responses featured in this chapter illustrate how the HR professionals who took part in the study have dealt with employment discrimination in their respective organizations. I will begin by presenting the findings based on the interview questions; I will then highlight the natural meaning units and emergent themes. Finally, I will discuss the findings and I will be concluding with a summary of the findings.

The presentation of my findings in this chapter follows Kvale's (1996) approach to data analysis. First, the participants' responses let the researcher know what they feel and do in their respective worlds. This happened during the conversations that took place between the participants and me. They talked to me about their backgrounds, when they began working at their present hotel jobs, and why they chose to work there. The participants felt a connection with the lived world based on the responses they gave and how much they shared with me. They told me about their love for the job, their difficulties with recruiting qualified individuals, their appreciation for being in a managerial role, their love for their employees, and their desire to make a difference in the lives of their employees. They also talked about the many benefits of their jobs, like encountering elite guests who stay at the hotels.

Findings

- Difficulty to recruit qualified candidates
- Love to be the manager
- Love the employees
- Love to make the difference in the lives of others
- Being burdened with discrimination claims
- Dislike employees who make claims of discrimination
- Employees claiming discrimination are disgruntled
- Love for the environment and community that they serve
- Love to be able to work in different cities
- Love to rub shoulders with the elite

Themes

- ❖ Love for the job
- ❖ Love for making a difference in the lives of others
- ❖ Feeling burden of handling discrimination claims
- ❖ Disgruntled employees
- ❖ No discrimination

Figure 3. Findings and Themes

Emergent Themes

Love for the Job

The first theme captures the majority of the participants' descriptions of the love they have for the job. For example, one participant stated that she stumbled into the industry by accident. Two participants entered the field because they have a degree in hospitality management and sought employment in their field of study. Others chose to

work in hotels because doing so always appealing to them, as it portrayed a rich and famous atmosphere. The participants all take pride in working for the hotel brands that employ them. They described enjoying the impressive hotel lobby, beautiful flowers, and front desk employees with crisp uniforms. They talked about the benefits they receive for being an employee, including discounted hotel stays for their families, friends, and themselves.

The participants explained that they hold revered positions in the hotel and are members of executive committees, which include the following positions: Hotel General Manager, Accounting Manager, Food and Beverage Director, and Director of Sales and Marketing. They have the opportunity to rub shoulders with the rich and powerful and work in a place where the elite congregate for coffee or tea. One of the participants, explained:

Zahra. Our orientations, even to this day . . . I just remember how impressive our orientation was: the coffee, the sterling silver, and it was phenomenal. It was a very busy hotel, and I remember it was very prestigious . . . celebrities, it's everything people think of when they think of hotels. Rich and famous stayed there, so it was high time for me. I loved it. We had an MOD program where all the managers had to be MOD once a month. It was at night, included having dinner in the restaurant, and you were always able to invite a guest. Very impressive. When I was working there I met a guy; we started dating. He was an entrepreneur, creative person. He was in the music industry and acting. He and I had an opportunity to move to Colorado, and he asked me to go with him, so I left that position and moved with him to Colorado.

Fatimah. said: That was that time in my life, and I enjoyed all the road I took there: when they sold the property then went to work as a consultant and travel the country for about a year and a half. I guess it was going into all the different types of hotels between the Starwood brands and the Choice brands. I was on the road 90% of my week and flying in every other weekend only during the course and what-nots! That was a heavy load, but very interesting. I would have not traded in.

Nada. stated: When I first started in my working career, each position that I ever had has been revolving around some level of customer service. And I've always ended up in some kind of supervisor or management position. When I decided to go back to college and finish my degree, I knew that I wanted to focus on management, specifically human resources. So I was very fortunate because I went back to college later, I already knew what I wanted to do, and I completely tailor my education to be where I wanted to be.

Rashida. commented: All my experience started with the Marriott brand, and the last eight years have been with the Ritz Carlton brand. But what I particularly like about the Marriott brand is the constant interest in growth of your career. It was a little stagnant at the beginning because I was in an HR generalist role for about seven years before things started to take off. But the nice thing is once the interest was known, I had advocates that were very eager to help me get to the next position. Concerning the fact that they truly like to promote from within is being a pleasure working for Marriott because constantly there always been an opportunity that has been there to move to the next position. Now I would admit once you get higher in the ladder, those opportunities don't come available as often; and, of course, because I am restricted to this particular

area, those opportunities are less available. However, as I was growing my career they were there, and I continue to take advantage of it.

Safa. stated: So my experience in hospitality: number one, that I love that my company has been creating relationships. I have built relationships with numerous people internationally and domestic, which has really opened many doors for me. And I kept that connection with all of those people I've met, and just working with the guests when I was in operations. Those guests that I worked with, I still stay in contact now with all of those people I've met. And just working with the guests when I was in operations, those guests that I worked with, I still stay in contact now.

Safa. went on to say: everyone can't work in hospitality. You have to love it, it has to be innate, it has to be an internal concession that one has to be able to provide the type of service that create relationships or create guests that come back to your establishment. And number three is giving back. What I mean by giving back is helping others to perfect their talent to grow within a company and enhance their skill set.

These excerpts from my interviews with the participants show the love that these professionals continue to have for their jobs, no matter how challenging it can be at times. Their quotes are in line with the theme. The participants' descriptions of their work environments are positive and happy. One participant explained that in order to be in this industry, one has to love it. Along with the beauty and glamour, it also presents an opposite side. One must work long hours, and become selfless. As they explained, a nine-to-five mindset does not work in the hospitality industry, as you never know when you might be needed, and your work is never done. They acknowledged that although it is not an easy industry to work in, they love it.

Love for Making a Difference in the Lives of Others

This second theme emerged from several participants' statements about wanting to make a difference. They professed love for their jobs and explained that the reason they continue to go to work is because of their employees and their love for being in service. Making a difference involves changing conditions for people, standing up for people, looking out for people, making sure their rights and dignity are protected at all times. Standing up for people is so significant in the U.S. that when people present a complaint, they need to be heard. Standing up is not about improving the lives of people who are already successful; it is about making everyone's lives better. Making a difference means presenting people with opportunities that could really benefit them and their families. It means giving them a voice, lobbying for necessary salary increases on their behalf, and providing them with an environment of love and joy as they continue to do their work. It involves finding programs that will help them when the hotel cuts hours during slow seasons, and ensuring that their responsibilities do not diminish. It means establishing programs that will help them further themselves in life—for example, providing opportunities for employees who want to go back to school so that they can excel.

Lamiya explained that her daily motto is, "I work to live and help people. The ability to continue to empower other to be better and to better their lives. Continue to teach, train and nurture the employees is what keeps me motivated."

Rifah. added: In the human resources field I would say that what motivates me is the people. The moment that you know you're making a positive impact on people's lives, knowing if I'm doing my job right (I) and well; I can very well balance between

telling somebody if they're right or wrong. You know, helping them work through, you know, a stepping stone or path in their life that gets them into a stronger, happier place. Uhm! Seeing the 'ah ha' moment of employees feeling like they've been taken care of and they enjoy where they're working and that they're cared about. Or when they learn something they didn't ever know before, for themselves or about their knowledge and experience within the work environment. Those are the things that keep me motivated. The legalities, the tasks, the paperwork of HR are not the fun sides of things. You know, it's just a part of the role; but it's truly the people that keep you pushing forward in it.

Ruqyah. added: You know, the one thing that does it for me is the growth and talent development of people. For example, where I am at, especially for the women . . . I'll give you one example: I have this housekeeper again. We got them people that have never worked before, so we bring them to the workforce, we train them, we teach them, we tell them. So we got ready to do paychecks, we pay direct deposit, so I tell this young lady we have to pay you direct deposit. She goes, "Oh! When you pay me, put it in my husband's account. And so I said "No! This is for you. You've worked, you scrubbed the room. Yes, you can put it on an account, but it's your account and you share with your husband. It can't go into your husband's account, because you worked hard. These are the things that I want women to understand. You can be empowered and liberated, so as long as you put it in there. He's gonna say it's ok, you put the money. He's gonna say this is what I'm doing, but you really worked hard for it. It's fine you share, but understand it goes into your account." I tried to get them, because I see they still not liberated, the mind is still that the man runs the finances versus I'm going to be independent and run my own finance.

Nada. stated: Yeah! I'm motivated to continue what I do, particular on this property, because I believe in the property and I believe in people. I know everybody that work on this property. I know their families, I know their history. I have their work history, because I work with them for 11 years. I work very hard to build a rapport with the associates to be known as being very accommodating, very friendly, very courteous, but also being fair sometimes when that means having a perfect conversation with them that they understand that I'm having that conversation with them because I'm needing to enforce whatever the issue is. And that's one of the reasons that I continue to stay in this property, is because I have worked very hard to have the rapport with not only the managers, but more importantly with the hourly associates. And, you know, supposedly do better than other time.

Rashida. said: I think of my employee, that's the very first thing. Enjoy interacting with the employees. It's all about the employees and taking care of them. It makes their world a better world and making sure that the environment that they work in is a pleasant environment, that's the key. What I particularly enjoy, and of course learning. I'm a true believer that every day you learn something new; I have to just be open to it and know when it's happening and say, "Ah! Here is a learning moment that always motivates me." Right now, what after 25 years continue to motivate me also know we as a company continue to grow and hopefully within the next couple of months until the beginning of next year, we will see new opportunities within the domestic U.S. There are a lot of opportunities abroad, but I'm looking for opportunities within the domestic U.S. will give us the growth opportunities. I would say that for the last couple of years due to lack of new product, our careers have been stagnant because we haven't been able

to apply for many new positions. But the good thing about that is that the way I combat that is by going back to school, taking a class for learning something new, or getting my certification in arbitration so I combat that with a learning opportunity.

Sheefa. said: The people, yeah! You know, I have a great staff and good friends here. Like I said, every day is a new day, and every day is a challenge, and I love the people that I work with. My door is always open, I know everyone, one on one, and I think that makes a huge difference. And, um, we here at the hotel work together as a team to get the job done together—it's not your job, my job, and anybody's specific job. We're all in it together. Um! It's more of a family type environment than just a work environment. It's a fun atmosphere to come to.

Marwah. concluded: The employees were my first motivators. Being able to help and guide them was instrumental. I have always tried to motivate, encourage, support, and empower my employees. I loved my work, my employees and I was always prepared to assist as long as what they asked was ethical and not illegal by nature.

The love for making a difference was common among the participants. It shows that HR professionals are in tune with the social demands that affect employees everywhere. They understand their struggles and what they go through, and they want to be supportive.

Burden of Handling Discrimination Claims

This theme appeared in participants' responses to one of my interview questions. Most of the participants agreed that the amount of work they have to do to retrieve documentation during an investigation process, along with the time it takes to answer an EEOC questionnaire, is a burden to handle—particularly because they must do it while continuing to manage their department and take care of arising issues. Human resources

professionals must keep accurate records. During their investigations, the EEOC sends out a list of items that must be given to them, along with a questionnaire that must be completed by the employer. The employer must supply documentation such as the employee file, including the application; the shell file that houses personal information about the employee, such as rate of pay; and documentation of any disciplinary actions administered prior to the filing of the discrimination claim. No one likes to be questioned about their processes; those HR professionals who have had to respond to charges attest to the painful, time consuming, tiresome, and tedious nature of the process.

Maram. with regard to this theme, stated: I see many red flags as soon the word discrimination is mentioned, and I encouraged the person: “If you felt that way, put a statement together and we will investigate.” My first experience with the charge was, I didn’t know what to expect. I don't know if it was going to be that much information. They needed all the details, and we handle it through the legal department of the company.

Maram. went on to say: My experience was painful, because it was my first experience, hum! When I read through the report, I thought that . . . My personal perception is he’s lying, but I couldn’t just say that. I had to prove with all my corrective action forms that were issued, and knowing now that I had to submit now, like the age, like the race, of every person that was documented in the last year. When I said it was painful, I was ready. I did have my corrective actions form logged, but it didn’t have races on it. So I learned going forward, I’m going to add that, you know, to the list. Because it will save me time. It was time consuming. I was ready to go on vacation on a cruise and I was not going to be able to continue to provide that information for the

lawyer. It was kind of painful, because you work with all these managers, you these associates and it was unexpected from them. Oh, I was discriminated! Why? You were not doing your job. Whether you were white, black, blue, yellow, hum! That why I referred to, when I said it was painful. The second one I received, I was, like, more I'm ready for this, and I had the logs, and I was able to respond to line the questions like the lawyer wanted me to. Because I learned from the first time. He didn't ask me, but I know that it was because I didn't have that much back and forth with him.

Maram. added: The difference is now you have more responsibilities. You are held accountable even more. If there are reports of discrimination or any type of harassment at the workplace, now is my responsibility. It's not something that I would bring up to my boss, something I have to take care of.

Zahra. similarly, said: Unfortunately, in my field you deal a lot with discrimination issues. So when you say discrimination, are speaking specifically of a specific race or in general? So, sure under title VII, race, sex, national origin most common ones that I have dealt with are racial discrimination, people feeling . . . and maybe even racial is incorrect, because I'm Haitian, not necessarily because I'm black. More national origin! It's probably the one I dealt with the most often. Really, in all my experience, I never found you could correct me if I wrong. Never recall a very valid one. It's a different type of treatment, not discrimination. Probably the closest one that I dealt with was a probably a female discrimination—discrimination where a female felt that she was not being paid in proportion to what a male was being paid. She had found out that someone was hired in a position that she had, and they paid significantly more, and it was a male. She actually filed a charge (EEOC). Because it was a charge from the EEOC, it

was handled mostly by our corporate office. I had to produce all the documents in response to the claim. It ended up where the EEOC did find the basis for her claim. But it was an interesting process to go through. It did give the appearance that somebody was hired after her, and it was a male. The EEOC did not find the basis. When we did the statements of the investigations, basically showed based on their experience and their education that's why they got paid a higher salary.

Safa. stated: Ok, with discrimination, let me think about that. I have not had an EEOC charge when it comes to discrimination, but we . . . Oh! Let me correct that. I have had that happen before. The experience was kind of sad, because of the ignorance of certain people and the community that don't understand sexual genders and transgender and being gay, you know, in the workforce. So I had to, first when I became human resources director, I had an EEOC charge where a gay male said that another male discriminated against him by calling him out of his name (meaning the derogatory term for being gay).

Lamiya. had a different experience, she said: Overall, in the hospitality industry I've dealt with a lot of employee relations issues. For the first seven years I've dealt with non-stop employee relations, training, as well as acquisitions. But more of it was the employee hotline, hum! More just the employee relations part of it. I dealt with the EEOC, mediations, and lawsuits, all of that fun stuff.

Rifah. said: Yeah! The experience in the beginning is that was quite an intimidating experience; because it seems so threatening from an outside looking in. When you don't know the logistics of discrimination can apply. What I had found in my environment and in my experience is that I do feel there's time that an EEOC charge and

somebody going in feeling like they were possibly wronged and their work environment that they don't process it as a discrimination or feel like it's a discrimination until they've gone to the EEOC and fill out their intake questions.

Fatimah. said: The one legal, I mean I had several things—the one that stick out because it took so long Huh! Months and months and it turned out to be so expensive for the company. And in the end we ended up having to pay the individual some money. It was a racial discrimination, and the person was in our room service department, and basically he had several write ups (disciplinary action form) over time, but maybe not as much as he should have had. And on this particular day, on one occasion he was let go by the general manager without my being present. I was the AGM (Assistant General Manager) not human resources. Like he decided to do it because he has had enough and never stopped as we do here suspend him.

Fatimah. continued: Research it, makes sure your facts are correct, accurate so that did not happen and the insinuation was: "You did this." However, he didn't realize he did this, this, and this; but he didn't do that. It tuned into such a battle, and probably after I had several times. There were two of them; the other one got thrown out because of my facts that I had to go forward as representative of the company. Uhm! But so I had to, so what is it again when you're called to court. I had to do that several times, I mean basically the bottom line was even though there was really, truly no discrimination. Because you did not do your crossing of your T's and the dotting of the I's and put the company in that situation. We ended up having to pay him. Of course, frustrated me to no end because he just knew the ropes to play, and he got away with it.

I am hoping it was a lesson for the person that handled this without doing their due diligence before, also involving HR too. Because that's sometimes important too, because usually you have to tell the person. Are you prepared to, let's think about it, let's suspend the person, that kind of stuff? That was probably the big one. And the other discrimination that I find is across the board, and I don't care where it is that I worked, people don't respect the policies and the procedures. And no matter how much HR or us being in the know might explain, it's important. You don't ask these questions. For example, you don't have children? Do you have a car? Those types of things could become such an issue. Also touchy feely on sexual discrimination. Too many times I see managers seemingly didn't mean anything by it, for example putting their arms on the employee's shoulder, showing compassion or whatever, and the other person is showing signs of being uncomfortable.

Bashayer. stated: I have had people make claims that were unsubstantiated, like after I've done an investigation. Like there's really no proof. One person says something, somebody else says something else; like, there is no proof of anything. Also, I was involved in a termination, and that person filled a discrimination lawsuit. We had to go to mediation. Basically what happened there, a lot of time you don't even they want X amount of dollars, and you want to pay them anything. And kind of what I learned is that you go back and forth, and you end up giving them something, and even if you're not at fault just because people don't want to litigate.

Bashayer. went on to add: It's too expensive. So that was kind of a lesson for me. Anybody can claim anything, and it might be unsubstantiated, but yet they can still get money. Which is just like workers compensation. They are hurt on the job, they're home

all day and they see commercials, they're bored and they get sucked in to that. And then a lot of times in workers compensation cases, they end up settling. Other than that I haven't got much. Luckily, I haven't got . . . hopefully, when things are handled correctly you don't have a lot of exposure to that, so yeah.

Sheefa. stated: Sure, both. Hum-hum! I had an associate that felt they were being discriminated upon because of their race, and it was not true. In fact, this employee worked in the housekeeping department too, where there was at that time about 32 associates. And there was only four White people in the department, and everyone else was of a different nationality. So since I've been here for the last 15 years, not one person has been discriminated upon in that department as well. They will bring up instances. They would continue to say that they did. They would bring up comments, and then they would say that's harassment discrimination. And the EEOC claim came through, you know the names weren't even right on the claim. And then he felt that was not taken seriously when all the actions were processed and documented on every incident, every question, every discussion that was ever had were documented. That's the biggest thing, and human resources you document every single thing that you do. So being that we documented very well, every contact that he came with every supervisor, and myself and his managers. Hum-hum we had everything down that we needed and did a huge deposition basically. Letter appealed, it went through, and it came back as there no discrimination. So we won.

These excerpts show that these HR professionals were not concerned about the case itself; they were unhappy that they had to answer questions for the EEOC and corporate attorney. Others felt vindicated when the EEC responded that the charges were

unsubstantiated. As previously stated, not all charges end in cases; however, there are legitimate cases that should have been litigated. During that time, if the paperwork does not conform with corporate guidelines, the HR professionals responsible for completing the paperwork could get in trouble for not doing their job. When a claim arrives, they have to provide all information about the employee. They have to copy the entire file and provide copies of any disciplinary actions that were taken against the employees. In essence, HR professionals are never happy when their office is under scrutiny. Some of the comments from participants revealed that they felt HR was attacked in the case of discrimination claims being filed, and they believed untrue statements were made. This clearly shows the level of discontent that HR professionals have toward the process of investigating claims of discrimination. Another participant accused the EEOC of asking leading questions in the questionnaire that HR professionals are required to complete.

Disgruntled Employees

This particular theme emerged from some of the participants' claims that most discrimination complaints they handled came from disgruntled employees who received disciplinary actions for lack of performance and wanted to get back at the employer. A few of the participants expressed the belief that some employees simply filed complaints because they were upset and wanted to retaliate. Additionally, some participants stated that the employees in their companies who filed claims fabricated their accusations.

Lamiya. with regard to this topic, shared: [Sigh] We dealt . . . actually, we had this one particular one that I could think of, is where it was a GM and an AGM, and they actually had a relationship from before. And so we come to find out after the fact, but, um. The AGM . . . the GM was on board. and the AGM as well; and when there was a

regional manager, they were picking up on from things that just weren't done right, and they were being held accountable. And the AGM was to let go due to performance, and she came back and said she was being discriminated against by the general manager. And we had to obviously investigate. Her termination still stood because it was for performance. But we let the GM go for discrimination and harassment.

Maram. stated: Sometimes the alleged accused person doesn't like it when I do a record of conversation, and I have to explain and over explain like this! That we were not able to corroborate any kind of discrimination. Sometimes it's a disgruntled employee, that, "Oh! You write me up, so I'm going to complain that you are . . . Oh! That's harassment." So I have to look at everything; but still, I would have to do, like, a record of conversation. That's just say that we had the conversation quote the handbook and that it. They are, like, they're thrown off. But it's not a write up. And I explain, you know, if the other person decides to sue, go to the EEOC, you know, this is my proof that I had this conversation with you. And that's something that I've learned. So sometimes I would like to explain to that person. "My supervisor is harassing me." She's like, "How is she harassing you?" "They tell me I'm not cleaning good." That's not harassment.

Maya. responded: Yeah! Absolutely, unfortunately! Actually, I could think of one particularly. Unfortunately, I think sometimes people take that very lightly, but we don't. We definitely don't take it lightly. And I mean, like, our managers, sometimes they think they could joke around with someone or, you know, um, and not act professional. And maybe the person doesn't get offended. I had a particular case with a gentleman that, you know, he was working. He has a particular medical issue that doesn't allow him to do a lot of his job functions, and there was a period at the hotel where we very . . . it was slow

season, and unfortunately we had to cut his hours as well and give him other things to do that perhaps just to keep him whole, just to keep him working. But in his mind he felt that the management team was discriminating against him because of his disability or medical condition, and we were not trying to accommodate him. I remember that in his job responsibilities he had to take something to a guest, and he did something wrong and he took it to the wrong guest. We had all these guest complaints, just became a total mess. He got documented. In his mind we weren't being fair or consistent because we documented him. And he would always say, "Well, I have this disability, and you know I made a mistake." True, he did; however, we were still trying to be fair and consistent.

Uhm! He filed a claim, I remember speaking to him and gathering all the information and getting specific like examples of his concerns, different managers or supervisors that he felt were not being fair with him, and his scheduling.

These quotes about disgruntlement reveal that the HR professionals who participated in the study were more focused on the employees who reported discrimination instead of on why the claim was filed and what could be done about it. They viewed the employee as an adversary to the organization. This perception of employees who filed discrimination claims was noticeable among most of the participants. They perceive them to be individuals who are trying to bring down the industry by making false statements. Furthermore, the participants denied that discrimination exists and refused to accept any responsibility for the issue. Their refusal to admit that there is an imminent problem that must be addressed shows their inability to care for the employee. They support themselves by placing blame on the employee and denying that discrimination exists. This clearly shows the posture of HR in the

organization. These professionals position themselves to protect the employer, even it means being unethical. The employers shield themselves behind highly paid attorneys who can defend them at all costs, while degrading the employee courageous enough to make a discrimination claim.

No Discrimination

This theme emerged when the majority of the participants who were interviewed stated that there is no discrimination whatsoever in their organizations. They insinuated that they have no issues at all, they are impeccable, and they do everything so well that they have no issues to discuss. They gave the impression that the hospitality is a good industry where everyone wants to work. By claiming that there is no discrimination in the industry, the participants essentially suggested that there are no issues in their respective organizations. When someone brings a case of discrimination against their organizations, these HR professionals see that person as a nuisance who wants to destroy them with the discrimination claims.

Rashida. addressed this issue by stating: Ok, so to tell you the truth, considering that we are an equal employment opportunity employer, I haven't had as much. I have dealt with cases of employees of mine at one point or another have stated that they felt harassed or discriminated upon.

Ruqyah. similarly, explained: No, the only one I can think of was someone with an alternative lifestyle. Discrimination was on the form of an alternative lifestyle, male, felt that he was being discriminating against because of his lifestyle. I went and investigated that situation, but during the investigation I encountered that the individual that claimed they were offended they were sought out because of their lifestyle. The

individual instigated the situation as to why the incident took place. But in the past, I never had anything that I would say. That was about 15 years ago at this one hotel that has happened. I never had that again.

Wallah. said: From the EEOC, no; I never received that. In regards to employee, yes; I have received those. I always take them seriously. It's a delicate situation. It is important not to jump to conclusion when you first hear the complaint, because that's typically in our nature to do so, right? But it's important not to do so, because you're only hearing one side of the story. And the important thing being in our position is to gather as much information as possible, as much details as possible to be able to come to a resolution. They're never easy again. It's a sensitive subject, and whether it's actually happening or not, the employee that bring forward the complaint is definitely feeling something. So you have to take it into consideration, right?

Moudhi. said: I can tell you working for Marriott International and the franchise, as far as discrimination we do not discriminate whatsoever. I haven't had any cases of discrimination if there has been; I haven't had any experience as far as dealing with discrimination.

The participants in the study generally claimed that there is no discrimination where they work. This leads to the impression that in the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach, HR professionals respect people, know how to deal with people, are doing very well, and have programs in place that protect people. They are very efficient, and everyone in the organization is trained and aware. They do not practice discrimination.

Discussion

The five primary themes I generated from the data were derived from the information participants shared with me during our interviews. The third, fourth, and fifth themes contradict the first two, which are about loving the job and loving supporting others. The main research question guiding this study was: What are the lived experiences of human resources professionals in the hospitality industry who have observed recurring patterns of employment discrimination? The fifth theme, which encompassed participants' claims that there is no discrimination in their organizations, reveals the essence of these participants' lived experience. However, although the participants claimed that there is no discrimination, they accused employees who make discrimination claims of being disgruntled. This is contradictory in nature.

Another interesting contradiction is that most of the participants stated that they want to make a difference in the lives of others. However, they admitted that people who work for them have filed complaints of discrimination. These statements disagree with each other, which points to a big issue. Wanting to make a difference in the life of others means first providing a safe, hassle free work environment. It means protecting employees' dignity, supporting them, and assisting them at all times. Additionally, it means that when a complaint emerges, they listen to the employee and take action to follow up on the complain. Instead, these professionals do not hear the employee out and either report the issue to the legal team, or set it aside completely.

It is possible to love your job and appreciate your employees, making a difference in their lives by helping them instead of becoming angry when they point out flaws in the organization. Human resources professionals should make a decision about whether they

want to continue to harbor the companies of employees who are not compliant. These professionals also contradict themselves and the responsibilities of their jobs. The themes I derived from this study imply that in spite of what appears in the existing literature and what is reflected in the EEOC's annual reports, HR professionals continue to claim that there is no discrimination in their respective organizations. It also reveals that supporting organizations such as the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) and EEOC are partly to blame for the confusion that exists.

The SHRM is another powerful entity that provides certifications and training for HR professionals. They could make a difference by providing seminars and training HR professionals on how to be proactive and correct dormant issues related to discrimination. They should avoid being complicit and tolerating ongoing discriminatory practices within their organizations, instead making strong recommendations to their managements companies. This proactive approach is preferable to maintaining a laissez-fair attitude and rethinking their approach only after a big lawsuit has been filed. It appears that at present, no one wants to be proactive in this manner. This is one of the essences that emerged from this last theme of no discrimination.

The EEOC shares some of the blame for this issue, because it fails to be proactive about the rising number of discrimination claims filed annually. They are not aligned with the concepts of the charter by which they were created. They have the right to pursue legal action on behalf of individuals and public interest; they are empowered to enforce the laws that make employment discrimination illegal (U.S. EEOC, 2016).

Summary

This study was aimed at exploring the lived experiences of HR professionals who have observed recurring patterns of discrimination in the hospitality industry. The EEOC annual reports, the existing literature on the subject, and my personal experiences as an HR professional for 10 years, make evident that there are recurring patterns of discrimination in the hospitality industry. Although the participants in the study expressed a desire to make a difference in the lives of others, they contradicted themselves by claiming that there is no discrimination in the hospitality industry in the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

In this chapter, I will review the findings of this study and compare them to the findings of previous studies that have addressed employment discrimination practices. I will also provide an overview of the important views expressed by some of the participants, who understand that change must happen in order for the industry to continue to exist. I will discuss how the findings answered the primary research question and will identify the contradictions in the participants' responses, which propelled the development of a theory about the effect of deniability on the industry and the stance taken by HR. Finally, I will make recommendations for future research and conclude the study.

Through this study, I sought to understand HR professionals' lived experiences with workplace discrimination, including the types of discrimination they've experienced and the outcome of the complaints brought by employees in their workplaces. The themes that evolved from their experiences include their denial that discrimination exists in the industry. The findings of the study, which indicate that there has been no discrimination in the Miami-Dade, Broward, or Palm Beach regions of Florida, are both perplexing and intriguing, as they provide an opportunity for critical examination of the conditional, concrete, and protectionist reasons why HR professionals defended the industry as non-discriminatory. The results of this study demonstrate that seeking information from HR professionals in the hospitality industry about discriminatory practices in the workplace may yield protectionism rather than recognition of the suffering experienced by discriminated employees. The finding of this study could become a game changer by forcing owners and operators to develop a better HR management system aiming at

nurturing employees. It could also assist in identifying new ways of restructuring the current system that will serve to improve the lives of individuals seeking employment in that industry.

It is important that both HR professionals and industry leaders make changes sooner rather than later. They must understand that the human element is important, as employees are not commodities that can be traded in when they are unable to perform. This could be an opportunity for the industry as a whole to initiate changes that will support employees by promoting them and educating them to become leaders in their respective fields. Human resources professionals must understand that the status quo is ineffective, and change needs to take place.

Some of the participants shared that the industry could provide more opportunities for employees, as industries like the healthcare industry and others have done and continue to do. One of the participants, an HR manager, explained that as a minority female, she has always had to work twice as hard to prove herself, as compared to her male counterparts. Another participant pointed out that the industry has failed to provide financial support for employees seeking higher education. She proposed that the industry should try to create means of advocating for employees by offering financial assistance and tuition reimbursement programs. The thoughts shared with me about gender bias in the industry and the lack of opportunities for advancement may be shared by other HR professionals; though many in the industry may believe that the industry could do more, they choose to keep their thoughts to themselves.

One of the participants, Nada, had the following to say about discrimination in the workplace:

I think that sometimes we forget that gender discrimination is so very real and prevalent. In my earlier career, I worked for a couple companies that were male dominated and definitely felt the discrimination from sexual harassment to inappropriate conversations to inappropriate touching; so from a personal perspective, I'm very sensitive to that, because I've experienced it. I think that even on our property, with as much as we work on diversity and discrimination and harassment training, we do see it. We see it not only with gender, not only with race and ethnicity, but I've also seen it from a family perspective, which was really interesting. But through investigations you will find that truly it has not occurred, and that is their perception of it; and sadly enough, we live in a society at this point in time where people utilize words very easily and not taking into account what does that mean and what it really looks like.

Human resources professionals in the industry are well aware of the issues that exist; however, they choose not to address them. This could be due to fear or other reasons.

Bonikowski (2009) notes that discrimination practices exist in low-wage labor markets; the hospitality industry falls into that category. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on age, race, national origin, color, and creed, the attitude in the industry has not changed with regard to hiring minorities for low paying jobs. The majority of employees in the hospitality industry are minorities—primarily immigrants—looking for a better life in the U.S.

It is evident based on the existing literature and other knowledge I have acquired that employees in the hospitality industry are largely overworked and underpaid. They

are unlikely to file complaints against their employers because they fear repercussion from their employers and co-workers. Some of the participants in the study shared with me that when employees complain multiple times, they are reminded by their supervisors that they are lucky to have a job. This is the attitude of most employers in low paying jobs. There are legitimate cases of discrimination that require the attention of the EEOC, which was created 51 years ago under Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. (U.S. EEOC, 2016). It has the power to prosecute employers who violate the rights of employees by discriminating against them based on race, gender, national origin, age, or other factors. Instead of being proactive, the EEOC prosecutes the violators only to see them return with different charges of discrimination. If an employer habitually offends employees' rights, the EEOC can implement sanctions.

According to Jenkins (2008), age discrimination—a subtle practice by which older workers are discarded and replaced by younger workers—is rampant in the hospitality industry. The author explains that HR departments are aware of these practices but choose not to act upon it. Obviously, these individuals are either afraid of backlash from their employers or fear losing their jobs. Human resources professionals appear to be distant when issues of discrimination arise in the workplace; they are recognized throughout the hospitality industry as being out of touch when it comes to these matters. This is more prevalent in countries that are not subject to EEOC rules, where employers can freely discriminate without fear or consequence.

The restaurant industry is another area where discriminatory practices are prevalent and flagrantly denied by owners and operators. Argusa and Coats (1998) conducted a study on these practices and reported that male and female employees in the

restaurant industry were unaware of policies against sexual harassment in the workplace. Surprisingly the employees in their study stated that they were unsure about the existence of anti-discrimination policies or trainings. In settings like restaurants, sexual harassment is rampant, and employees who are harassed sometimes leave their jobs instead of continuing to bear the burden of being humiliated by their co-workers or managers.

Argusa and Coats's (1998) study pointed to a lack of responsibility among HR professionals in the restaurant industry. They identified that restaurant employees believe sexual harassment to be more acceptable in the restaurant industry than in other industries. The participants in their study probably never saw an HR representative at their restaurants, and they never received training about sexual harassment or other forms of discrimination. To cut costs, restaurants assign the training of employees on such matters to location managers, and nothing is done until an employee brings a charge of harassment or discrimination. The managers and owners of restaurant establishments tend not to be concerned about employees and their behavior; all is well until someone decides to file a claim of harassment. In the interest of time, managers discredit employees by labeling them disgruntled instead of investigating the issue to find the root cause (Argusa & Coats, 1998).

Harassment and discrimination tend to be carried out by upper-level managers who bully employees into submission, often threatening to terminate them if they fail to comply with their demeaning and humiliating demands. In spite of clear knowledge about how this happens, industry leaders are unconcerned about being held liable; they often protect themselves by hiring expensive attorneys to defend them in court and purchasing

insurance policies to cover damages incurred in these types of cases. This approach only causes the cycle of workplace discrimination to continue.

The current practices in place to prevent discrimination are flawed in many ways. Human resources professionals tend to defer to training and development to remedy issues of harassment or other forms of discrimination that arise. However, training tends to be ineffective, because nobody listens or takes it seriously. Employees see training as a nuisance, expressing discontent when they have to attend. Furthermore, there are many immigrant employees in the industry who have difficulty understanding the training due to language barriers but do not inquire about ways to receive the material in their native language. For reasons yet unknown, industry leaders are not in compliance with workplace discrimination laws and do not make sufficient efforts to help employees comprehend the importance of training (Roig-Franzia, Higman, Farhi, & Thompson, 2016).

Emergent Themes and Their Contribution

The findings of this study include five explicit themes that contradict the primary research question guiding the study. This study was aimed at uncovering recurring patterns of employment discrimination in the hospitality industry. However, the findings clearly indicate that HR professionals are in denial about the existence of discrimination in the industry. They claimed that employees who report claim of discrimination are disgruntled and do so because they want to get back at the organization.

In addition to posing a main research question to guide the study, I also crafted subsequent questions to help me collect rich information about the lived experiences of the HR professionals who participated in the study. These questions supported me in

starting conversations with the participants about the main question, which helped me collect responses and generate themes. The five themes I generated from the data I collected—two of which contradict each other—show that the role of the HR professionals in the hospitality industry is not simple, and these professionals serve as a buffer between managers and employees.

Theme 1: Love for the Job

The majority of the participants expressed that they love their job and enjoy the perks that come with it. They expressed that they have every reason to love what they do, as compared to other employees in the workplace. Based on the responses I collected, the HR professionals in this study are satisfied with their positions and the way they are being treated by their employers. However, they take a protectionist stance, failing to realize that they have a responsibility to both their employers and the employees of their workplaces. While these professionals believe that they have a balancing act, they fail to act in a balanced way, as they only protect their benefactors. They make rational choice decisions by not giving a voice to their employees. For example, they fail to discuss increases with employees or foster the idea that employees are assets and should be treated fairly. They also fail to suggest or promote processes by which employees could further their careers by attending programs to benefit themselves that are paid for or reimbursed by the organization. Human resources professionals could be the voice of reason in the workplace; however, they choose to turn a blind eye to the issues employees face, and they do not speak on their behalf in support of their needs. Though they claim that their jobs are a balancing act, they do not act as such.

Theme 2: Love for Making a Difference in the Lives of Others

This theme contradicts the next three themes, because it clearly shows the disconnect that exists between perception and reality. Making a difference in the lives of others means watching them grow and celebrating them for their accomplishments. For example, it includes providing training for employees who possess great leadership skills in order to nurture them, promote them to the next level, and support them in achieving their life goals. Making a difference means many things to many people; therefore, the participants' perceptions could lead them to believe that they are making a difference in employees' lives when, in fact, they are not. The contradiction that exists between HR professionals and other employees clearly demonstrates that power is a one-way street. As long as the employees are subservient, they can benefit from the difference HR wants to make in their lives; however, if they oppose them in any way, the consequences could be detrimental.

Theme 3: Burden of Handling Discrimination Claims

One of the responsibilities of HR professionals is to provide information about any employee filing a discrimination charge. Human resources professionals tend to focus only on the issue at hand, not thinking twice about the employee. The participants in this study revealed that when issues of discrimination arise, they focus most on their personal resistance to dealing with the issue and their concerns about what it could mean for them—such as one participant who feared that a discrimination claim would keep her from being able to go on a planned vacation. Human resources professionals are in a good position to become the voice of those who cannot speak, but they do not tend to

take this responsibility seriously. This clearly shows that HR professionals simply care about collecting a paycheck and cashing in on upcoming vacations.

Theme 4: Disgruntled Employees

The use of labels like *disgruntled* to describe employees who file claims clearly shows that HR professionals position themselves to protect the employer, not the employees. These professionals either do not care or are interested only in following the guidelines dictated by their management companies. If HR professionals upheld their responsibility to protect employees, they would not be disgruntled. For example, some employees are forced to eat while they work, as managers are sometimes too busy to cover their breaks. The participants in this study indicated that they are fully aware of incidents like this, which are a clear violation of labor laws. However, citing reasons like budgetary constraints, they allow the employees to be overworked and do nothing about it.

Theme 5: No Discrimination

The participant responses making up this theme contradict information from the existing literature about discriminatory practices in the industry. The participants in this study revealed the protectionism that exists in the industry, as HR professionals enable and protect the people in power who discriminate against those less powerful. They claim that the workplace is operating well, and employees who claim discrimination are simply instigating and creating issues in the industry. They claim that they love their employees and do not discriminate against them. They claim to provide trainings and have zero tolerance for discrimination. The denial of discrimination among the participants in this study is remarkably inaccurate. As indicated by the existing literature on the subject and

annual reports from the EEOC, discriminatory practices in the hospitality industry are prevalent, and HR needs to come to terms with it.

Implications of the Findings

The themes that emerged from the findings clearly demonstrate that HR professionals in the hospitality industry love their job. As they shared with me, the employees are the reason they go to work every day. However, when those same employees complain about discrimination, the HR professionals suddenly feel differently about them. They claim that their statements are untrue, that they are disgruntled, and that they are claiming discrimination to retaliate after they were rightfully disciplined. They claim that they want to make a difference in the employees' lives and that there is no discrimination whatsoever in their workplaces.

The role of the HR professional in the workplace has long been that of visionary and peacemaker. But when HR changed its approach, becoming a business partner and making the bottom line its top priority, things changed significantly. With this business partner attitude comes a protectionist stance and a shifting of blame onto employees. Human resources professionals lost touch with reality when they began protecting their pockets instead of well being of their employees. Although I hoped that at least one participant in this study would acknowledge that discrimination exists, I was surprised to find that everyone who participated asserted that discrimination does not exist in their workplaces.

Theory of Deniability

The theory of deniability that emerged from this study is rooted in the contradictory responses provided by the participants during the interview process. There

is a disconnect between the findings of this study and the posture of HR professionals in the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. Based on the stance taken by HR professionals, it appears that HR has changed its approach from visionary to protectionist; by denying that discrimination exists, these professionals are protecting the industry instead of supporting and protecting the true human resources of the organization: employees. If there were no existing literature on the subject of discrimination in the hospitality industry, the findings from this study could have been accepted at face value. However, there is ample evidence in the literature to contradict the claim of no discrimination.

An explanation of the findings is not possible without a theoretical device for comparative analysis. This theory allows for a better understanding of the behaviors displayed by the HR professionals in this study. For example, they do not accept blame and instead place it on the employees. They protect the people they work for by being irresponsible and unethical. They support and hide behind legal guns that defend them in court. They have no regard for the wellbeing of employees and sacrifice their dignity in order to victimize those employees for the sake of profits and year-end bonuses. This gives the appearance that when a complaint is brought, HR professionals investigate it only for show. That is, unless an official claim is brought from the EEOC, in which case their attention is devoted to showing that they are not at fault and the employee is being untruthful.

The theory also shows that HR professionals to sweep under the rug many issues that could expose them to liability and remuneration from claimants. By denying that discrimination exists, HR professionals have become combative instead of compassionate

and caring, as they claim to be. Furthermore, this theory implies that fear is instilled in the minds of those employees who do not report discrimination out of fear that their managers will retaliate. It demonstrates why many employees choose to walk away instead of fighting back.

The posture of denial among the participants in this study clearly shows that HR can be insensitive and irresponsible. If the saying that history repeats itself holds true, HR professionals who continue to deny the existence of discrimination in the industry need to look retrospectively at what happened in the 1990s to Shoney's, Inc. This large restaurant chain was totally dismantled by a single lawsuit for race-based discrimination. It took one case to open the door for several others, and the rest was history. Human resources professionals should be cognizant that taking the stance of no discrimination and projecting blame onto employees could become carcinogenic for the industry.

One of the most fascinating findings from the study is the lack of awareness among HR professionals of the statistical data demonstrating the existence of discrimination in the hospitality industry. Ignoring this fact will not excuse these professionals from being dragged to court. Human resources professionals in the hospitality industry need to familiarize themselves with the existing data on claims of discrimination based on race, age, national origin, gender, color, and creed reported under Title VII.

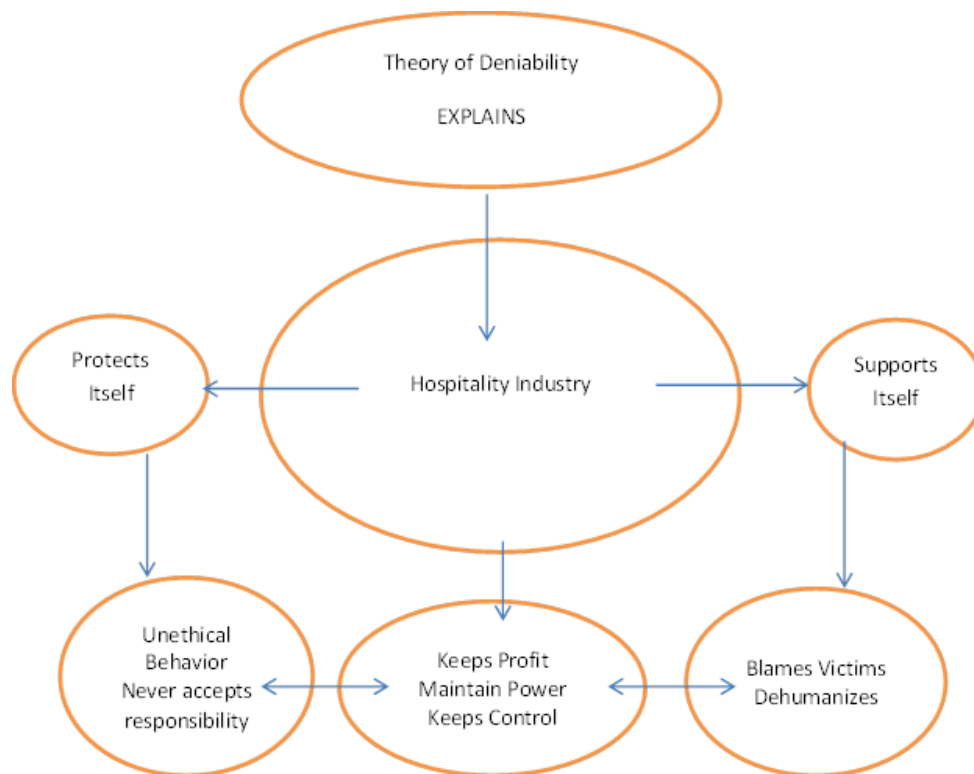


Figure 4. Theory of Deniability

The theory of deniability holds that when powerful corporate systems have important interests to protect, they are likely to deny any involvement in the violation of employee rights, privileges, and dignity. In the case of the hospitality industry in the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach, it would be bad business for employers to accept blame in cases of discrimination. The complaints could open the door for additional lawsuits that could cripple the industry, as employees filing such complaints usually demand monetary compensation and other rectifications. It is more profitable for HR professionals to deny restitution to complainants, thus neglecting their basic ethical responsibility to employees. In other words, the industry is never at fault.

The second part of the theory of deniability is the reversal of blame. It is important to blame victims—thus further dehumanizing them—so that the consistent narrative that employees who complain about discrimination are incompetent and at fault

can be upheld. This theory helps with the understanding of how victims are re-victimized and dehumanized. In addition, the theory helps to identify something quite unique. It clarifies why industries are so powerful and preemptively thwarts any attempts by employees to bring complaints of discrimination. This may account for why many employees who experience discrimination often choose to simply walk away.

Denying the existence of discrimination in the workplace has consequences. Some of the more tragic ones are the powerlessness that employees experience. In this study, it was interesting to see the power and authority the HR professionals manifested as they matter-of-factly insisted that there was no discrimination in the hospitality industry. Even without conducting research, it is impossible to claim that any workplace is immune from bias and discriminatory practices.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations, including the participants' hesitation to participate because of the topic. Although qualitative studies rely on interview style questions for the collection of data, this leads to the possibility of participants understating their responses with the hopes of manipulating the results. The participants' desire for me to change the method by which I collected data clearly shows that not only did they fear the discovery of information, they also wanted to ensure that the outcome of the study would show something other than what I was hoping to uncover.

Some participants wanted to change the topic and expressed that discrimination was not something with which HR professionals should be associated. There is little existing literature on the subject of discrimination for the period of time that I examined; the only existing articles on discrimination in the industry are dated. The participants in

this study represent a small group of individuals in the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach in Southeast Florida. Although the HR professionals who participated appeared to be candid about their responses, some of them were hesitant when answering the questions related to discrimination. It is possible that some participants were dishonest in the responses they gave.

Expected Contributions

My hope for this study was to raise awareness and educate managers and owners about the potential damage caused by employment discrimination. I wanted to illustrate the deleterious effects of discrimination on employee morale, as employees who experience discrimination are often forced to quit their jobs and seek employment in other industries where they feel safe and free from dehumanization. The hospitality industry is robust, and denying that discrimination exists within it has consequences that could seriously impact the lives of many immigrants seeking hospitality jobs. Because the industry has been rewarding those who continue to deny that discrimination exists, HR professionals are at a standstill. In order to remedy the damages caused by this irresponsible attitude, HR professionals must allow themselves to be human and understand the suffering of others. They can remain business partners; however, their insensitive and irresponsible attitudes must change. Otherwise, it could cost them their livelihood. These professionals must become the employee advocates they once were and find a way to manage the bottom line while refraining from sacrificing employees in the process.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the five themes that led to the development of the theory of deniability that accounts for the behavior of HR professionals in the hospitality industry. I concluded that HR is out of touch with the reality that exists and made the case that it has abandoned the supportive role it once played by camouflaging unprofessional behavior from management. Although the HR professionals who took part in this study stated that they want to make a difference in the lives of their employees, the results of the study show that this is clearly not the case. It is evident that HR has turned a blind eye to organizational misconduct, thereby turning its back on employees. The hospitality industry rewards those who remain silent about unprofessional and inhumane practices in the workplace; it frowns upon anyone who dares to speak up, finding clever ways to terminate them. The leaders of the industry, along with HR professionals, need to look at the existing data on the existence of discrimination and begin a conversation about how to remedy the issue instead of continuing to sweep it under the rug.

Recommendations for Future Research

The primary goal of this study was to uncover patterns of discrimination in the hospitality industry. Although the findings reflect the opposite of what I hoped to uncover, I was able to identify a clear disconnect between HR and the real world. Because the field of hospitality is not fully researched, one of the recommendations for future research is to conduct a mixed method study utilizing a survey that allows participants to respond freely to research questions. I believe that in qualitative studies, participants can choose to answer any way they want and provide inaccurate information. The use of a survey would allow participants to distance themselves from the

information, because they only need to answer *yes* or *no*, and they can do so relatively anonymously.

The second recommendation is for the EEOC, which has been in existence for the past 51 years. It is important for the commission to look at what it has accomplished during this time and revisit other areas that have not improved. It should apply the necessary changes in order to manage or eradicate recurring issues of discrimination, perhaps increasing fines for violators who continue to discriminate. The EEOC cannot focus only on winning cases; it must find ways to eradicate the issue of workplace discrimination by going to the root causes. If employers are not compliant, they should be fined. In addition, the commission should seek other remedies that can aid in solving this problem that appears unsolvable.

The annual reports from the EEOC show a rise in the number of cases reported yearly and the dollar amounts awarded to plaintiffs; until HR professionals begin to take action to make a difference, those numbers will continue to rise. The articles I reviewed for this study also indicate the rise in discrimination. Smith and Joseph (2011), Mitchell (2011), and Cavico and Mujtaba (2012) highlight the issues of discrimination that continue to plague the American workplace. Ignoring the data, or saying that it isn't so, will not change anything; the issue will not stop until HR professionals across industries take a stand and put an end to the degradation of human beings in the workplace

The third recommendation is for the HR professionals who continue to be complicit in the recurring problem of employment discrimination practices. They should be proactive, because training obviously does not help. There are alternatives that exist, and they should take the proverbial wheel and drive this necessary change. Some of the

HR professionals I interviewed for this study expressed concerns about the existence of HR departments in their organizations. Because of technological advancements that are rendering HR processes obsolete, the future of HR is uncertain. In finding ways to continue validating the existence of HR in organizations, HR professionals need to show that their essential functions should remain even as technology continues to progress. The human must be kept in human resources. Furthermore, HR professionals must be on task to ensure that harassment in the workplace is eradicated by using their zero tolerance powers and terminating those who violate the rules.

In June of 2016, one of the most publicized cases of harassment propelled the resignation of the CEO of a prominent news organization (Wilkie, 2016). This shows that until employees who are discriminated against can report it to HR without hesitation and the issue is investigated appropriately, the EEOC will remain in business, and the court system will continue to prosecute these types of cases. Human resources professionals need to find innovative ways to combat discriminatory behavior and maintain a zero tolerance policy. Violators need to be terminated once it is determined that they have, in fact, discriminated against employees. Human resources professionals need to be vigilant and apply policies consistently. Sweeping these issues under the rug will result in a cancer that cannot be cured. Industry leaders need to be part of the process, taking action and creating institutional change.

My primary goal for this study was to understand how HR professionals deal with employment discrimination in their respective organizations. Instead, the responses I gathered from my interviews with participants show that HR professionals deny the fact that discrimination exists at all. This contradiction gave way to the development of the

theory of deniability, which shows that HR has assumed the role of protectionist, speaking out of both sides of their mouths by saying one thing and doing something else. It clearly shows that the industry is powerful enough to protect itself through unethical behavior and a shirking of responsibility. It maintains power by controlling all aspects of communication within the system. Professionals in this industry, including those in HR, support themselves by blaming and dehumanizing the victims or workplace discrimination. The result of this study could lead to the development of new policies within the hospitality industry to remedy past instances of discriminations and better the lives of current employees and stakeholders within the industry.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Project: An exploration of the lived world of HR professionals in the hospitality industry who observed recurring patterns of employment discrimination

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Participant:

Position of Participant:

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your career in the hospitality industry?
2. Tell me about the type of responsibility you have?
3. Tell me about your employment experience in your organization?
4. Can you tell me about your experience dealing with discrimination in the position that you are in?
5. Share with me some of the things that motivate your continued stay at your organization?
6. Tell me about some of the challenges you encountered working in this organization?
7. Share with me some of your ideas regarding the kind of organization you would like to work in?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation. Your confidentiality will be guarded.

Appendix B

Sample Information Letter

An Exploration of the lived world of Human Resources Professionals in the Hospitality industry: A Qualitative Research Study.

Dear Research Participant,

My name is Nadia R. Lucien and I am a student at Nova Southeastern University working on a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Conflict Analysis and Resolution. I am conducting a research study that will look at the lived experiences of Human Resources Professionals who observed recurring patterns of employment discrimination in the hospitality industry.

I am inviting you to participate because you are currently Human Resource Professional in the Hospitality industry. I will ask you questions about your experiences of employment discrimination in your role as an HR professional. The interview will take place at the Alvin Sherman Library in a private room. The study will look at Human Resources Professionals who has served as: Generalists, Managers, Directors, and Vice Presidents with 5-20 years of experience.

The interview will last no more than 45 minutes. If during the interview I learn of anything that could make you ineligible for the study, I will end the interview. The goal of this research is to raise awareness and to educate managers and owners about the dissonance of employment discrimination and the detriment that it can pose on the entire organization and affect morale.

You have the right to leave this study at any time or refuse to participate. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to participate, you will not experience any penalty or loss of services you have a right to receive. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact me at (954) 937-0079 or at lnadia@nova.edu. You may contact my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Alexia Georgakopoulos at (954) 262-3054 or georgako@nova.edu., or the Oversight Board, and Institutional Review Board at (954) 262-5369 or at IRB@nsu.nova.edu.

Sincerely,

Nadia R. Lucien

Appendix C

Sample Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in the Research Study Entitled
*The Power to change lives: An exploration of the lived world of Human Resources
 Professionals in the Hospitality industry: A Qualitative Research Study.*

Funding Source: None.

IRB protocol #

Principal Investigator (s)
 Nadia R Lucien, M.S
 3700 Terrapin Lane # 308
 Coral Springs, FL 33067
 (954) 937-0079
lnadia@nova.edu

Co-Investigator (s)
 Alexia Georgakopoulos, Ph.D.
 Nova Southeastern University
 3301 College Avenue
 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
 (954) 262-3054
georgako@nova.edu

For questions/concerns about your research rights, contact:
 Human Research Oversight Board (Institutional Review Board or IRB)
 Nova Southeastern University
 (954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790
IRB@nsu.nova.edu

Site Information
 Nova Southeastern University
 Alvin Sherman Library
 3100 Ray Ferrero Blvd
 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
 (954) 262-5473

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a research study. The goal of this research is to raise awareness and to educate managers and owners about the dissonance of employment discrimination and the detriment that it can pose on the entire organization and affect employee morale.

Why are you asking me?

We are inviting you to participate because you are currently Human Resource Professional in the Hospitality industry. There will be between 20 and 25 participants in this research study.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?

The researcher Ms. Nadia R. Lucien will interview you. Ms. Lucien will ask you questions about your experiences of employment discrimination in your role as an HR professional. The interview will last no more than 45 minutes. If during the interview the researcher learns of anything that could make you ineligible for the study, Ms. Lucien will end the interview.

Is there any audio or video recording?

This research project will include audio recording of the interview using a digital audio recorder and handwritten notes. The audio recording will be available to be heard by Ms. Nadia R. Lucien, the IRB, and the dissertation chair Dr. Georgakopoulos. Ms. Nadia R. Lucien will transcribe the recording. Ms. Lucien will use earphones while transcribing the interviews to guard your privacy. The recording will be kept securely in Ms. Lucien's office in a locked cabinet. The recording will be kept for 36 months from the end of the study. The recording will be destroyed after that time by shredding the tape. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described in this paragraph.

What are the dangers to me?

Risks to you are minimal, meaning they are not thought to be greater than other risks you experience everyday. Being recorded means that confidentiality cannot be promised. Sharing your opinions about your experience may make you anxious or bring back unhappy memories. If this happens Ms. Lucien will move to the next question immediately. If you have questions about the research, your research rights, or if you experience an injury because of the research please contact Ms. Lucien at (954) 937-0079. You may also contact the IRB at the numbers indicated above with questions about your research rights.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

There are no benefits to you for participating.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information private?

I will not ask you for any information that could be linked to you. The transcripts of the tapes will not have any information that could be linked to you. As mentioned, the tapes will be destroyed 36 months after the study ends. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The IRB, regulatory agencies, or Dr. Georgakopoulos may review research records.

What if I do not want to participate or I want to leave the study?

You have the right to leave this study at any time or refuse to participate. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to participate, you will not experience any penalty or loss of services you have a right to receive. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research

records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

Other Considerations:

If the researchers learn anything that might change your mind about being involved, you will be told of this information.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing below, you indicate that

- this study has been explained to you
- you have read this document or it has been read to you
- your questions about this research study have been answered
- you have been told that you may ask the researchers any study related questions in the future or contact them in the event of a research-related injury
- you have been told that you may ask Institutional Review Board (IRB) personnel questions about your study rights
- you are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read and signed it
- you voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled *the lived experiences of human resources professionals in the hospitality industry who observed recurring patterns of employment discrimination*.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Biographical Sketch

Nadia R. Lucien received her undergraduate degree in Baking and Pastry Arts and Food Service Management from Johnson and Wales University and went on to earn a master's degree in Human Resources Management from Nova Southeastern University. Following the completion of her master's program, she began a career in Human Resources management, soon becoming a manager. While working as a Director of HR, she began a doctoral degree program in Conflict Resolution to seek knowledge that would help her address ongoing workplace conflicts. Nadia took classes including Human Factor, Mediation, Facilitation, Theories of Conflict, Conflict Resolution, and Teaching and Training Practicum. She realized that she could combine her managerial skills and academic skills in the role of teacher, and she pursued that career direction instead of remaining a manager.

Nadia accepted a position at a local college, where she taught the following hospitality courses: Front Office Management, Hospitality Purchasing, and Hospitality Management. She later returned to the hotel industry in 2012, opening the first managed American Hotel in the Island of Haiti. In 2015 she accepted a teaching position at Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University as a Lecturer in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where she currently teaches at the Female campus in Al Khobar. Nadia is a single mother to one daughter.