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# EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN AMERICA

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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF  
AFRICAN AMERICANS IN AMERICA

by

Jariah Henderson

B.S., Southern Illinois University, 2014

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Science

Department of Rehabilitation Counseling  
in the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF AFRICAN  
AMERICANS IN AMERICA

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Jariah Henderson

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

in the field of Rehabilitation Counseling

Approved by:

Professor Keith B. Wilson, Chair

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
December 14, 2018

## **AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF**

Jariah Henderson, for the Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling, presented on December 14, 2018, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

**TITLE: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN AMERICA**

**MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Keith B. Wilson.**

This research paper will survey some impacts of racial discrimination and some effects it has on the quality of life of African Americans in America. According to Webster (2018), quality of life is defined as “the happiness, independence, and freedom available to an individual.” This paper will also explore variables, including discrimination, in areas of employment and hiring, higher education experiences, policing and profiling/brutality, healthcare systems, and, mass incarceration, and other stereotypical biases. It focuses on discovering the impact of the quality of life of African American men, women and children and their life experiences as a direct result of such discriminations.

In addition, this paper aims to explore these variables focusing on racial discrimination. I will examine the history of mistreatment and discrimination of African Americans throughout history in a linear format, which in result leads to the diminishing quality of life for African Americans. Focusing on the quality of life, I will provide evidence that supports this theory. These issues continue to be problems that profoundly affect the livelihood, life experiences, and socioeconomic status of African Americans because of discrimination. The literature support used throughout this research paper explores the phenomena, scenarios, stories, and lives of African Americans impacted by a system of injustice. Racial discrimination comes at a cost that negatively affects the social, psychological, and physiological outcomes for African Americans. After analyzing these issues, I challenge you review the facts, unfair treatment, and biases that

can negatively influence the quality of life of African Americans. Some questions readers may formulate when reading facts, history, and stories of affected African Americans. One may begin to question has racial discrimination become the new phenomena in America? Has history begin to repeat itself or has media coverage increased America's awareness of its crooked ways? The rise of many social advocates such as the Black Lives Movement discuss issues and bring light to the injustices, mass killings, and discrimination that those in the African American community face daily.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this paper to the African American communities living in the struggle daily. To my daughter Brooklyn, you can do whatever you want in life with hard work and dedication. My family who has been supportive throughout this time and encouraging at times needed the most.

## PREFACE

I have chosen to examine racial discrimination, mistreatment, and biases African Americans are subjected to living in the United States ultimately negatively impact quality of life. In my analysis, I will address multiple variables and areas where African Americans experience discrimination in their everyday lives. I aim to explore each variable to gain a better understanding of such a great phenomenon and influential issue. Thus, this paper draws data from both qualitative and quantitative studies to explain and analyze these variables. The variables include race, sex, and social economic status of African Americans. The mistreatment of African Americans is very close to me as an African American woman having had personal experiences with discrimination. While there are more variables that individuals experience discrimination in their daily lives, I believe these specific variables are very important mitigating factors for many members of this population. In America, race can negatively affect one's life based upon experiences connected to and resulting from the selected variables. Racism encompasses unequal and restricted access to goods and services that limits one's ability to live a full life. Furthermore, services can include but not limited too access to adequate health care, education, employment, and etcetera. For centuries race centered on riots, protest, legislations, and acts, while failing to highlight the goods and services African Americans may not receive due to the color of their skin. The research conducted will explore racial discrimination and evidence of listed variables that include police brutality, poverty, and life in low-income neighborhoods, employment opportunities for blacks, and intersections with sexual discrimination against black women in the workplace. As a direct result of discrimination, African Americans quality of life is negatively affected.



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## CHAPTER 1

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Discrimination:** According to Merriam Webster (1826), discrimination is a prejudiced or prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment.

**Quality of Life:** According to Merriam Webster (1826), suggests that quality of life describes the happiness, freedom, and independence that is available to an individual (persons)

**Higher Education:** According to Merriam Webster (1826), higher education is described as education learning at a college level or university level

**Brutality:** According to Merriam Webster (1826), suggests that brutality is the state or action of being brutal

**Incarceration:** According to Merriam Webster (1826), incarceration refers to the state of being imprisoned or being confined in jail

**Racism:** According to Merriam Webster (1826), suggests that racism is the belief that race is the primary determinant of human capacities and traits that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race

**Employment:** According to Merriam Webster (1826), suggests the act that one is employed or holds a job

**Poverty:** According to Merriam Webster (1826), refers to the state of one who lacks social acceptable amount of material possessions or money

**Profiling:** According to Merriam Webster (1826), refers to the state of extrapolating information about a person based on a person's known traits or tendencies

## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT IS RACIAL DISCRIMINATION?

What is race? Why is race so important? Race is a group of persons related by common descent or heredity (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 2017). According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2018), racial discrimination involves treating someone unfavorably because he/she is of a certain race or possesses personal characteristics associated with race. Unfortunately, research shows that race is a key mitigating factor used to discriminate against an individual. Research evidence supported throughout this paper will support this claim. Many questions can arise from understanding this topic in depth. I will begin by examining the deep-rooted history in chronological order of racial discrimination and unfair treatment of African Americans in America. Thus, next I will be taking a look at discrimination through a historical perspective.

#### **Discrimination against African American: Historical Perspective**

Discrimination throughout African American history tells a story of how African Americans have had to adjust to a life that has not always been self-fulfilling. Quality of life can mean to experience a life that has happiness or creates excitement based on situations or certain circumstances. When looking at African Americans history of discrimination ask yourself how one can live a full life without having the same opportunities or feelings of constantly fighting the world based off of one's skin color. When looking at African American history, it has been noted to send chills and thoughts of frustration throughout the African American community. According to documented African American History Marquis (2012), bondage was first practiced in the American colonies in both the 17th and 18th centuries. Many African Americans through slavery were forced to help build the new world. U.S. slavery began in 1619 in Jamestown,

Virginia. According to Marques (2012), European settlers begin buying African slaves due to cheaper cost and plentiful slave choices. Furthermore, Marques (2012), states that slaves were overworked and not paid for long laboring hours. America began to boom in areas of crop growing, tobacco, and its most lucrative business the production of cotton; in many areas during the late 17th century after the Revolutionary War begin to abolish slavery. However, in many southern states this was far from the case. These states flourished from the blood, sweat, and tears of the slaves. In 1808, the U.S. Congress outlawed the trade of African American slaves. According to Marques (2012), due to a high demand for slaves, the African slave trade continued to flourish and so did the slave population tripling over the next 50 years. Southern states begin to purchase multitudes of slaves with very restrictive codes and harsh punishments. Slaves were forbidden to learn to write or read, their behaviors and actions were monitored and scrutinized. Harsher punishments resulted in death for some slaves. In addition, many slave owners took advantage of their power and in engaged in sexual activity and favors with slaves resulting in Mulatto children. In 1831, in Virginia a black slave named Nat Turner murdered 60 whites in a two-day span (History.com, 2009). Momentum continued to increase as freed blacks in northern and anti-slavery states helped fugitive slaves escape from southern plantations. This is known as the passage through the Underground Railroad. The government ensued to pass legislations and acts such as the Missouri Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska Act to set standards of slavery throughout the U.S. However, slavery continued until President Abraham Lincoln became president. Shortly, after the Civil War begin many African Americans fought alongside Whites. On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation that aimed to free slaves in America. However, as noted in history slaves were not freed until after the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment on December 18, 1865 (History.com, 2009). According to Miah (2012),

upon gaining freedom, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment allowed slaves equal protection and the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment offered the right to vote. After the passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment, many pro-white groups begin to form anti-black groups known as the Klu Klux Klan that targeted African American citizens with hate crimes. Furthermore, making discrimination more of a nationwide crisis, having the government to step in and make laws regarding discriminatory issues. One would state that the government has to step in to fight for basic rights of African Americans in order to live a full life. Next, I will be discussing court rulings that deal with racial discrimination in hopes of giving African American equal opportunity in jobs, education, and to stop unnecessary killings or mistreatment of one based on the color of one's skin.

### **Court Rulings**

Thus, after slavery ended, high race tension was still at an all-time high. In southern states, Jim Crow laws were imposed that included separate educational systems based upon races, transportation, leisure activities, and other establishments that allowed former slave owners empowerment over blacks. According to Hutchinson (2015), discrimination cases continued to rise in efforts to combat unequal treatment of African Americans. Furthermore, cases like Plessy v. Ferguson aimed to lay the foundation of the fight against racial discrimination towards African Americans in America. The Brown v. Board Education of Topeka case ended segregation in schools in America. Many black activist and leaders that empowered the African American community such as Washington Carver, Booker Washington, and W.E.B Dubois were pioneers in fighting for wealth and leadership in the African American community (History.com, 2009). Next, I will discuss how employment opportunities were limited during early ages due to discrimination on the basis of skin color. Therefore, noting that employment opportunities and

discrimination against African Americans has been an ongoing issue. Thus, causing African Americans to not be able to live a full happy life, which in result, limits their quality of life.

## **World War II**

During World War II African Americans were discriminated against in many different ways. Ways that prevented them from being able to hold certain jobs within the army, live in certain places, and have access to the same rights because of their skin color. Although, many African Americans fought in World War II, they were housed separate because of their race. The first black declared hero emerged during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Tuskegee Airmen were the first black military aviation program was responsible for more than 3,000 successful missions (History.com, 2009). In 1948, President Harry S. Truman began to integrate America's armed forces to ensure equal treatment for all persons serving in the army. Next, I will discuss court cases in the United States that brought attention to discrimination against African Americans in education and killings that are a direct result of the color of one's skin.

## **African American Court Cases and Killings: Historical Perspective**

Research has been proven to show that discrimination in regards to race has been a long-time battle for the American people, primarily affecting those of color. Therefore, attention to make legislation and laws regarding the treatment of African Americans has been in the works for the last couple of hundred years. For instance, the verdict in the Plessy v. Ferguson case, a new win was on the rise for the African American community with the win of the Brown V. Board of Education in 1954 ruling. This ruling ended racial segregation in public schooling. Southern states resisted against integration in the schooling system (History.com, 2009). Most recognizable states were Arkansas and Alabama that required federal intervention. Again, few years later in Money, Mississippi a 14-year-old African American was kidnapped, beaten and

dumped in a river by racist white men. These men sought revenge against Emmett Till for supposedly whistling at a white woman, which was a forbidden law. According to Kolin (2016), the white men were acquitted of all charges after openly admitted to committing the crime. This outraged the African American community and the widespread attention of Emmett's mutilated body was on display for the world to see. Additionally, frustrations of anger were sent throughout the world due to hearing about common cases of black killings or abuse, impelling sit-in, boycotts, and racial equality throughout the United States.

### **Sit-Ins, Boycotts & Progression**

Moreover, amidst the already present struggles faced and discrimination continued to persist as Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat for a white woman. She was arrested for violating racial segregation ordinances. This called for a huge change for African Americans and propelled them into action to protests, sit-ins, and called for nationwide desegregation of buses (History.com, 2009). The battle had only just begun. As stated before, Arkansas was forced federally to integrate schools due to resistance from the governor who was court ordered. Furthermore, the entire fiasco was televised, and will go down in history as the "Little Rock Nine" for million viewers to view vivid moments and unforgettable racism. The nine brave children being escorted on national TV showing bravery and tackling racial discrimination in the face. In 1902, integration in grade school had been outdated, but higher education had not been stepped on. In 1962, James Meredith became the first African Americans to enroll in a white institution. According to Watkins (2016), his transition was from easy and took the assistance of federal forces to protect and control angry white mobs. Race tension was at and all time high and continued to rise as whites relentlessly attacked African American churches killing innocent children in Alabama. However, the Klu Klux Klan members took responsibilities for these

killings. African Americans continued to fight against discrimination. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his memorable “I Have a Dream” speech speaking about the struggles of African Americans. The late John F. Kennedy and his support of Civil Rights legislation aimed to protect those of color against desegregation in public supported his brave leadership and led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to Augustine and Pierre (2016), the Voting Rights Act and the Equal Opportunity of Employment aimed to protect the rights and employment opportunities of all citizens. Voting Rights Act of 1965 ensured federally protection and banned strict testing used to vote. In the 1965, a march to Selma was prompted by the shooting and killing of an African American man. After the exhaustion with unequal treatment, the Black Panthers Party formed, and blacks begin to fight back and demand equality against police authority. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 was passed to ensure equal housing for African American population in urban areas. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. African Americans gained momentum. The legislation began to make impactful changes for African Americans in Higher Education and Affirmative Action legislation.

Mistreatment of blacks continued to be a recurring thing. In 1992, Rodney King was brutally beaten on video by several white officers in Los Angeles, California. This sparked national coverage of an outbreak of riots and killings in the area. In efforts to gather support and solidarity, the Black Million Man March was started. Futhermore, the march aimed to bring renewal amongst black men and uplift one another (History.com, 2009). Progression continued as African Americans continued to make strides to seek change to improve the quality of life for themselves. Colin Powell was elected as the first black member of Congress. In 2008, the struggles of ancestors seemed to pay off when the 44<sup>th</sup> U.S. President was elected. Barak Obama was the first black president (History.com, 2009). He was even elected for a second term. This



brought restoration to a broken community of people who continued to struggle with the difficulties of being black in America. Furthermore, I will discuss different variables that blacks have experienced discrimination in.

## CHAPTER 3

### RELEVANCE OF DISCRIMINATION VARIABLES

#### Relevance in America

Discrimination in schools, jobs, sports, and school system are variables that were and continued to be significant in the foundation that the United States was established. Many of the pertinent issues around racial discrimination continued to be a problem for this country's citizens of colors. According to Brettschneider and Williams (2004), "there is a growing interest in whiteness as a part of an ongoing critical examination of racism, conditions of people of color, and power dynamics in the differential treatment of individuals according to the systematic categorizations known as race" (pg. 241). Furthermore, this is evident and embedded in our history shares the story of white America's privileges, oppressive empowerment, mistreatment, and hierarchy over all others races in America. According to Butler (2016), "#BlackLivesMatter and #ICantBreathe, and last year's massacre of nine black Christians killed in a South Carolina church by a white supremacist has brought conversations about race once again into the national spotlight" (pg. 66). Discrimination and exploitation of Blacks have not been America's only crime. Our history shows mistreatment of other races enslaved, lands taken, and continued discrimination against other minorities including Chinese, Mexican, Latino, Jews, and Arabians Americans. Some may argue that Blacks have been progressive and doing and have done well for themselves in areas of employment, education, political participation and other areas of life. However, can white America argue that the playing field is even or has laws and legations in place ensured people aligned with our nation's new fundamental values? Our new President Donald Trump has been very vocal about his goals and vision for America openly and transparently. Some of these visions can arguably be deemed discriminatory or bias. The increase

of police killing unarmed blacks, racial profiling, and increase calling of police on Blacks has plummeted in record numbers since Trump's election. Has our country reverted to our racial discriminatory roots? Many would argue that maybe we never moved on from the past. Perhaps, we have learned to hide our deep-rooted feelings, attitudes, beliefs, actions, and decisions better in White America.

### **Introduction of Variables**

As previously stated in the introduction, I will begin to delve into exploring variables of areas of discrimination that impact the quality of life of African Americans. I recommend that additional research is conducted to gage a better understanding of each variable's validity and impact. This analysis aims to explore areas of discriminatory practices including higher education experiences, health and illness related to stress and services, employment, sexual orientation, and high rates of unemployment and racial profiling. These variables when paired with racial discrimination can negatively influence the quality of life for African Americans. First, I will discuss discrimination in regards to higher education opportunities. How educational opportunities affect one from being able to pursue the careers that one wants to achieve can limit their ability to live a full life. Thus, minimizing their quality of life, if one does not have the same opportunities as others, as a direct result of their race.

### **Higher Education**

African Americans students pursuing higher education degrees, has increased the past few years and is expected to continue to climb. However, research suggests that more African Americans are going to college and receiving degrees, but African Americans still face day-to-day struggles with discrimination from professors and classmates. According to Thomas (2017), racial discrimination has been found to impede the academic success of African American

college students in several ways; this study found that colleges with negative racial climates contributed to African American students having lower expectations for academic success, dropping classes, changing majors, and transferring schools (pg. 28). Thomas (2017) states that, “students also feel that if professors view them in a negative or stereotypical way or expect low expectations from their African American students it can have a negative effect on their performance or attitudes within that specific class, which in result can lead to bad grades or negative attitudes of participating” (pg. 28). Likewise, research suggests that there are two different beliefs that African Americans hold about education. Thomas (2017) study found the following:

First, education has been found to be a very important role and life-changing experiences in the African American community. Research suggests that African Americans hold beliefs about education that in order to be successful one must be educated. Secondly, African American students may believe that their education is important, but their concrete beliefs based on their experiences with racism in the education system lead them to have lower expectations for academic success (p. 29).

Likewise, students who held negative attitudes about their teachers and administrators had a lower motivation in school. Thomas (2017), which in result, stopped those students from wanting to take advance placement classes because the teachers did not think they were intelligent enough for the classes and counselors told them the classes were too difficult for them (p. 29). According to Thomas (2017), expectancy-value theory, expectations for educational success influence academic performance: higher expectations lead to improved performance; furthermore, expectations for educational success as a result are influenced by previous experiences” (pg. 30). Cabera, Carter and Nora (1994) determined that students in higher education experiences

prejudice and discrimination negatively affect their sense of belonging and social engagement.

The authors argue that “fostering positive racial climates on college campus are crucial for faculty that assists students in areas of critical thinking for all students” (136). The authors argue that enhancing critical skills reduces disparities amongst African American and White students. Metzger, Cooper, Richwood, Oneyeuku & Griffin 2017, conducted a study on African Americans students’ experiences with stress and discrimination in higher education. The study found that students at alcohol risk reported more frequent experiences with racial discrimination. Results supported the theoretical suggestive (stress-coping theory) revealed that the alcohol risk group due to dealing with emotionally distressing experiences” (382).

## CHAPTER 4

### HEALTH ISSUES, ILLNESS, & SERVICES

#### African American Illnesses & Services

Nevertheless, research suggests that autonomy has been a huge factor in African Americans decision making in how to respond to discrimination making health issues more or less likely to affect one's body. Secondly, research suggests that autonomy can be different for one by focusing on how well one identifies with being black or identifies with their ethnic background. Therefore, having prior knowledge to experiencing some sort of discrimination growing up, one will less likely be affected by harsh or unfair treatment later in life. Meaning, those individuals who connect with their blackness or cultural background of being African American will have a better chance of dealing with stressful encounters with other races or counterparts. Thus, if one identifies with their cultural identity it will cause less stress which could lead to diminishing of one's quality of life. Furthermore, Neblett and Roberts (2013) state that African Americans who hold being black as important, having high racial centrality, and feel positive about being black may be more likely to perceive racial discrimination and have more opportunities to cope and deal with these experiences (pg. 944). Neblett and Roberts (2013) found that racial identity moderates the association between racial discrimination and psychological adjustment. In addition to these findings, Neblett and Roberts (2013) also found that when individuals who did not hold being black as a central component of their identity experienced more stress, depressive symptoms, and anxiety as a response to daily racial hassles, and those who reported higher levels of racial centrality were unaffected by daily racial hassles (pg. 943). Neblett and Roberts (2013) discuss a study conducted on African American female college students, using laboratory analogs of racism using videos as well as imagery to examine

the effect of blatant racism condition. This study showed African American women being unjustly accused of shoplifting by a hostile white security guard; the study found that participants showed heightened physiological responses such as muscle activity, increase heart rate, and digital blood flow in this blatant racism condition (pg. 944). Cuffee et al (2013) states that a study of African American college students found that viewing film clips depicting acts of racism increased cardiovascular effects of discrimination reactivity, in addition to these findings' immediate cardiovascular effects of discrimination studies suggests that chronic exposure to discrimination increases the risk of having uncontrolled blood pressure (p. 55). Next, I will discuss health issues amongst African Americans and how it can negatively impact quality of life in regards to employment opportunities, encounters with police, racial profiling and sexual orientation.

### **Health Issues**

Furthermore, according to Coler, Ramey, Cooksey, and Williams (2018), non-Hispanic blacks face rates of hypertension, diabetes, and obesity that are 25%, 49%, and 59% higher, respectively, than those found among non-Hispanic whites, while Hispanics experience rates of diabetes and obesity that are 25% and 20% higher than non-Hispanic whites (pg. 168). In addition to this research, according to Cuffee, Briesacher, Hargreaves, Hullett, Rosal, Schoenthaler, Person, and Allison (2013) states, within the United States the prevalence of hypertension is 45.7% among African American women and 43.0% among African American men, compared with 31.3% among white women and 33.9% among white men (pg. 55). Moreover, it also finds that the national nutrition examination survey found that 33% of whites diagnosed with hypertension have controlled hypertension compared to the 28% of African Americans (Cuffee et al, 2013). In addition to these findings, research also suggests that one of

the biggest factors of health issues in the African American community stems from one's social economic status. Coler et al (2018) states, "the association between SES and health has been shown to be positive, linear, and monotonic, such that with each additional increase in social economic standing, we expect an individual's health to improve in a step-wise fashion" (pg. 168). In comparison to this research, Monk (2015), states, "African Americans overall death rate was 30% higher than whites, and blacks had had higher death rates than whites for 10 of the 15 leading causes of death" (pg. 397).

Research suggests that the primary variable for African Americans experiencing more unfavorable health issues deals primarily with social economic status (SES). Furthermore, Monk (2015) supports that, "researchers find that ethno racial inequality in social economic status, which has been documented by social scientist for decades, is a key predictor of ethno racial disparities in health (pg. 397). Some research may suggest that, as African Americans who become more financially stable may become healthier having the opportunity to afford better health care treatment options. Despite of these predictions Lewis and Van Dyke (2018) study found that race and SES interact for this group and African Americans who consistently reporting more discrimination than those who had lower SES counterparts (pg. 178). However, it is suspected that African Americans experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment effect their physical health reports. According to Colen (2018), the greater exposure to unfair treatment has been demonstrated to result in significantly higher daytime blood pressure readings as well as worse nocturnal blood pressure recovery patterns, more rapid heart rates, and elevated cortisol secretions (pg. 169). In comparison to this finding Monk (2015) study found that although many studies perceive discrimination is often significantly associated with the incidence or severity of a variety of mental and physical health outcomes such as depression, psychological distress,



anxiety, hypertension, self-reported health, and even breast cancer (pg. 398). In contrast to other articles, Coler et al (2018) states that evidence shows the association between unfair treatment and wellbeing might be more pronounced for mental as opposed to physical health outcomes (pg. 168). Furthermore, research suggests that individuals of racial minorities experience more health issues than those of non-Hispanic or whites due to unfair treatment or lack of resources for affordable health care. Other research likes to look at intersectionality, the African American race, and variables such as gender, age, class, and sexual orientation. A study by Lewis and Van Dyke (2018) found that African American women would experience discrimination that will be roughly different from those of African American men (pg. 178). For example, Lewis and Van Dyke (2018) suggests that African American women were more likely than African American men to report interpersonal incivilities, while African American men reported more major experiences of discrimination, in particular experiences with police and criminal profiling than that of African American women (pg. 178).

In addition to this research, professionals also suggest that a reason for failing health in African American communities has to do with African Americans not trusting physicians. Cuffee et al (2013) states that historical mistreatment of African Americans seeking care has contributed to mistrust seen among the African American community. Secondly, African Americans participants reported less trust in their physicians compared to whites, with the primary variable being that of fear (pg. 59). According to Cuffee et al (2013), African Americans are more likely to be diagnosed with hypertension, more likely to have untreated hypertension, and more likely to suffer adverse clinical consequences from uncontrolled hypertension, including myocardial infarction, heart failure, as Cronin kidney disease (pg. 55). Moreover, Cuffee (2013) states that the association of racial discrimination lowers trust in health care providers and the medical

system in general. Second, patients possessing lower trust are less likely to seek health care and thus less likely to follow the instructions of health care providers (pg. 56). Cuffee et al (2013) conducted a survey of African Americans patients receiving care in an inner city, in hopes of finding the relationship between medication adherence and discrimination that could account for the non-trust of physicians by African Americans (pg. 56). The study took place within the Alabama collaboration for cardiovascular equality with the objectives of the TRUST study to examine factors such as discrimination, trust, medication adherence, self-efficacy, and access to care among African Americans with hypertension living within the inner city (Cuffee et al, 2013, pg. 56). This study looks at variables such as age, gender, education, and income. Cuffee et al (2013), study found that first, African Americans primary care patients who were diagnosed with hypertension in an inner city, safety net setting, racial discrimination was associated with lower medication and adherence”, secondly, they associated high adherence with increased age, male gender, and greater trust in physicians (pg. 58). However, lack of trust physicians is one variable examined. Many professionals suggest that the lack of seeking help for medical issues in the African American community deals with physicians viewing African Americans in stereotypical ways. For example, Cuffee et al (2013) found that, African Americans may recognize the unintentional bias of a provider and thus have reduced trust in that provider (pg. 59).

In addition to these findings, Cuffee et al (2013) also suggests that a physician may take a fatalistic approach towards their patients, meaning, the providers perceive their clients as a lack of concern or interest in their well-being, thus creating a self-fulfilling prophecy (pg. 59). The results also found that African American women are less likely to comply with medication adherence than that of African American men. Some may argue that women focus more on

taking care of others in the family and less likely to treat their own medical issues (Cuffee et al, 2013).

Lastly, Cuffee et al (2013) found that among a population of lower income veterans, those with lower trust in physicians were more likely to underuse medications in response to cost pressure. Thus, concluding that African Americans not only struggle with trusting providers, medical adherence, untreated diagnoses, but also not affording medications and medical treatment. In addition to not trusting health care physicians, sexual orientation can also play a role in discrimination when seeking health care information, employment opportunities, or engaging with law officials. In my opinion if one feels that “being black” already causes them to receive unfair treatment in regards to health care, women and men who identify or struggle with sexual identity may not want to seek treatment due to fear or unfair treatment. For instance, if one identifies as homosexual and black one may fear that going to the doctor they will be viewed as weak or nasty, which could keep one from seeking medical help or regular checkups. Thus, in result, can cause one to suffer physically and emotionally which in essence can diminish one’s quality to live a happy healthy life.

## CHAPTER 5

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

#### **Homosexuality of African American Men & Women**

Likewise, research has been conducted to investigate the amount of discrimination that African American homosexual men and women encounter. According to Dale, Bogart, Halvan, Wagner, Pantalone, and Klein (2016), “theories of intersectionality describes how such of-occurring social identities, such as; race, gender, sexual orientation, are experienced as interlocking (i.e. black man versus “black” and “men”) at the individual level and reflect larger social iniquities and oppression at the macro level (pg. 574). According to Dale et al (2016), states that HIV positive African American men are subjected to discrimination, stigma, and hate crimes related to their multiple identities-including racial identity, HIV status, and sexual orientation, each which are associated with worse health outcomes for this group (pg. 575). Despite homosexually being more socially recognized and socially accepted it may still be hard for one to be accepted within their own identity or identity within their community, especially the African American community. Dale et al (2016) state that HIV positive African American men often reside within disenfranchised neighborhoods with high poverty and significant neighborhood-related stressors, which may set the stage for discrimination and hate crimes (pg. 575). Furthermore, Dale et al (2016) suggests that African Americans living in high poverty neighborhoods may be patrolled more frequently by police officers, who may racially profile and harass African American men, and could further discriminate if an individual’s sexual orientation or HIV status are revealed during the course of the interaction or while in police custody (pg. 575). In addition to, African Americans experiencing sexual orientation discrimination by police, living in high poverty neighborhoods, employment discrimination is an issue as well. Thus, next

I will be discussing employment discrimination that African Americans face daily, which in results limits one's ability to live a happy stress-free life. If one cannot afford to take care of one's family they cannot be living to their full potential, which in result limits their quality of life.

## **Employment**

According to Salier (1996), Robinson experiences with racial discrimination required baseball commissioner to stand his ground, which caused integration to spill over into other professional sports. Robinson later become a spokesperson and advocate against racial discrimination. Nevertheless, lack of jobs or unemployment is a very important topic to cover when discussing African Americans experiencing discrimination while trying to find employment. According to Pitts (2007), the singular focus on unemployment as the crisis of jobs in the black community has led to numerous efforts to better prepare job seekers, help stimulate small business entrepreneurship and create retail districts (pg. 42). Despite the history of African Americans fighting to have the same privileges as whites, research suggests that African Americans still struggle finding good jobs within their own community. Likewise, there has been studies that research the likelihood of communities placing Walmart is in the middle of urban cities in hopes of giving African Americans job opportunities despite if it is low paying and not enough to take care of one's family. According to Pitts (2007), the presence of Walmart in central city communities creates what seems to be a choice between no jobs or low wage jobs, Walmart and its supporters advocate that communities with high poverty rates should accept bad jobs as being better than no jobs (pg. 42).

Next, I will address black women and men and their experiences with employment and working in corporate jobs. Research suggests that working provides happiness by being able to

support oneself and one's family. African Americans not being able to have secure or promotions within employment opportunities to provide for their families effects their quality of life.

### **Unemployment & Blacks**

According to Pedulla (2018) "I argue that long-term unemployment may provide redundant information to employers about black job applicants because stereotypes about unemployed workers overlap heavily with employers' stereotypes of black workers as having low levels of competence, poor work ethics, and "spotty" employment histories" (pg. 1478). This study also found that it was easier for white Americans to hold employment opportunities than African Americans, even if a white American did not have any prior job experience. Pedulla (2018) study also found that African American unemployment rate is roughly doubled that of whites. (pg.1478). Pedulla (2018) states, "qualitative research consistently finds that employers hold stereotypes about black workers as lacking competence, motivation, and soft skills as well having poor employment histories that are often riddled with spells of unemployment (pg. 1479). African Americans face persistent discrimination despite their educational levels as well.

Bell et al (2010) seek to explore unemployment earnings lower wages of African Americans in America. The author calls for solidarity economy to provide better opportunities to provide black with an opportunity to provide blacks with an opportunity to build wealth and minimizes the gap of wealth that slavery imposed. Forty-year post-Civil Rights Act trends in managerial representation shows overrepresentation of white men in management has remained unchanged, even with increasing of blacks going expanding sectors of the economy (pg. 227). Social scientists have produced evidentiary support of continued discrimination, inequality, and increasingly precarious work concurrent with workforce diversity (pg. 228). One may argue that if social scientists have supporting evidence that shows discrimination is still an increasing

problem more legislation and regulations would be implemented within our employment opportunities to monitor decision made on employment. Access discrimination has been defined as discrimination after employment in job assignment, compensation, promotion, and termination (pg. 228). According to Bell black in history comparable qualified performing tenured are worse off than whites Asians and Hispanics (2010). Many “black sounding names or sounding black over the phone” reduces applicants’ likelihood of employment and necessary time and effort to review employers for employment. In a study, conducted applicants who whitened their resumes fared better on applications. Many of these disparities to access to work continue to contribute to high unemployment rates, promotions, and higher salaries. Blacks unemployed and stay unemployed longer than similarly educated others. These employment and unemployment disparities affect the quality of life of African Americans.

## CHAPTER 6

### RACIAL PROFILLING, INCARCERATION & POLICE BRUTALITY

#### **Racial Profiling, Police Brutality, and Mass Incarceration**

Lastly, I will address racial profiling and police brutality amongst African Americans. African Americans experiencing discrimination in the American prison system is at an all-time high today. According to Browning, Miller, Spruance (2001), “although blacks make up about 13% of the US population, they constitute 50% of the state and federal prison population. This is an alarming number, as some 353,851 blacks were arrested on drug charges (pg. 88). In comparison to another study conducted, Vogel and Porter (2015) found that although blacks and Hispanics make up about 30% of the population they make up about 56% of the US prison population (pg. 516). In a study conducted by Browning et al (2001) being in prison not only separates families from loved ones but also causes one to lose their sense of personal cultural identity, in other words, drives a wedge between inmates and their kinship web. Prison may be viewed as locking one in prison not only affects the inmate but also puts a wedge between a parent and their offspring, a sibling of a sibling, and partner of an inmate, etc. In comparison to other research, research supports these findings. According to Dauria, Oakley, Arriola, Elifson, Wingood, and Cooper (2015), “In 2011, black men were imprisoned at a rate that was more than six times higher than that of white counterparts” (pg. 1191). They also found that black men are more likely incarcerated than that of a black woman. According to Dauria et al (2015), in 2011 they found that there were roughly 21 black men incarcerated for every black woman incarcerated. According to Browning et al (2001), “nearly 1.5 million U.S. children-2% of the nation’s minors had a parent in prison at the end of the twentieth century, and black children are nearly nine times more likely to have a parent in prison” (pg. 88). According to Browning et al



(2001) Black families are more likely left to take care of their family members children once these fathers are incarcerated. These families are underfunded many times, which in result can lead to families placing these children in inadequate custody of social service providers.

Browning et al (2001) states ‘while no doubt a subject worthy of intervention and scholarly attention, at 93% the “imprisoned race/gender” is that of a black male’ (pg. 88). In addition, research suggests that the United States has the highest rate of incarceration around the world. The United States incarceration rate is the highest in the world surpassing the incarceration rate for the former Soviet Union, in result, making the United States the world leader in imprisonment (Browning et al 2001). Browning et al (2001) found, “mid-year 2000, ninety five percent of those prison inmates were male, and almost 50% of these males were black; the incarceration rate for black men is seven times higher the rate for white men (3250 per 100,000 compared with 461 per 100,000)” (pg. 89). According to Vogel and Porter (2015), a study found that “while whites in their 30’s were more likely to have their bachelor’s degree at the close of the century, black males in their 30’s were more likely to have prison records” (pg. 516). The study also found that found that Hispanic males are three times more likely to be incarcerated than white men (Vogel and Porter, 2015). Research also suggests that African Americans are more likely to stopped and searched by police. Racial profiling has been highly controversial considering the rising numbers of killings of unarmed black men and women. According to Lichtenberg (2006), racial profiling has not been succinctly defined, however, if the police use the race of a person as the sole grounds to initiate an investigation, it constitutes as racial profiling (pg. 50). This topic may be viewed as controversial we must rely on available research to take a look at the discovery rate of specific drugs by race, the amount of stop and frisk dependent on race, and also the number of unarmed shootings by race. Debates are at an all-time

high on whether there are motives behind racial profiling or are they instigated by factors other than racism (Lichtenberg, 2006, pg. 49). According to Khoury (2008), “Racial profiling is the use of race in conjunction with space as key factors in police decisions to stop and search blacks. The police are permitted to use race as an indictable of suspiciousness” (pg. 56). Khoury (2008), also found that state and federal court cases have gave permission to police to do a “pre-textual” stop when they see someone who looks out of place, for example, a black man in a predominately white neighborhood (pg. 56). In comparison to these studies, in a study conducted by Vogel and Porter (2015), prior work in this area is framed within one of two competing schools of thought: higher incarcerated rates among blacks and Hispanics reflect true differences in offending (differential involvement) or (2) higher incarceration rates reflect discriminatory treatment by the criminal justice system (differential treatment) (pg. 516). In other words, African Americans as well as Hispanics are more likely to experience discrimination due to geographical areas. Hispanics as well as African Americans are more likely to live in areas considered to be “crime prone” thus they are at a higher risk of offending, in other words committing a crime (Vogel and Porter, 2015).

Furthermore, Dunlap and Golub (2011), dives into the lives of African American women and the interplay between poverty, structural barriers, controlling image and the oppression that face in their everyday lives. The article begins by unmasking the history that Black women have faced oppression through sexism, racism, and classism. The authors embark on the journey displaying the imaging of Black women with misguided messages, which in turn sustain incorrect beliefs about African American women and blaming them from their conditions. The authors argued that race is responsible for the oppression experienced by the impoverishments of Black women. One participant recalls experiences discrimination in the welfare office. The

participant reflects on how this matter made her feel. One may argue that many policies that are being made have some discriminatory beliefs and practices that will be imposed on those that receive assistance. These policies reinforce oppression and maintain barriers in the lives of African American women in the past and today. The article argues that in order to see change then policies must be accountable for the images put out, offering better educational and goal attainment programs for women to grow, thrive and will help individuals an opportunity to be better.

### **Driving While Black**

According to Geiger-Oneto and Phillips (2003) states that “driving while black” has ignited an intense public dialogue, promoting editorials, official investigations, special commissions; data gathering programs, lobbying efforts, and lawsuits (p.p. 2). Likewise, driving while black has become a huge debate within American societies today. It has been said that predominantly white officers stop those who they believe to be black in hopes of finding drugs or paraphernalia in their cars. Although driving while black can affect black men and women it is suggested that African American men are more likely targeted by white officers. Likewise, according to Nicholson (2016), the phrase driving while black originated in African American communities, DWB describes the frequency with which black drivers report being racially profiled by police, who may follow, stop, question or search the black driver and or passenger, and issue tickets for minor infractions (p. 553). Driving while black has been receiving a lot of media attention due to the amount of unarmed black shootings that have been occurring nationwide. With social media being a more accessible across the nation, phone cameras and videos have been catching and exposing situations where police have used force, unnecessary physical harm, and the worst-case scenario the killing or shooting of those who are not armed.

Police have been trained to say that those who pose a threat and are freighting to that of police officers may result in using force or their gun if they are very fearful of their lives. Moreover, research has hopes of highlighting police brutality with emphasis on having police to have cameras installed to stop the rising levels of shootings on unarmed blacks. According to Nicholson (2016) Walter Scott was a 50-year-old African American male who was shot dead in South Carolina by a police officer after being stopped for a faulty brake light (pg. 554). After the police officers stopped Mr. Scott he fled from his vehicle being shot multiple times in his back. The police officers said that they feared for their life and had to use necessary force, however, a witness came forward with a video that showed Walter fleeing the scene and being shot in his back (Nicholson, 2016, pg. 554). Sadly, Walter is only one of many with a case like this. This article also touches on Sandra Bland who was an African American woman who was stopped by police and arrested. After Sandra was removed from the view of the police came on the dashboard her arresting officer said that she was trying to assault him, and he was forced to arrest her. Later, Sandra was found hung in her cell, which was later ruled a suicide. Despite these findings, driving while black is only one layer of the problem. Walking while black is also another issue that African Americans face discrimination. Furthermore, walking while black, describes the racial profiling, stopping and questioning of black pedestrians by police, particularly in white neighborhoods (Nicholson, 2016, pg. 555). In addition to walking while black, stories such as Trayvon Martin has grabbed Americans attention. When a young African American male was shot and killed while walking in a predominantly white neighborhood after being stopped by a neighborhood security guard for looking “suspicious” and wearing his hood, although Trayvon was walking home in his own neighborhood. The facts remain that although history may be repeating itself African Americans have made strives to be more educated, have

higher economic statuses, and live in better neighborhoods. These instances of driving while black is not new to the African American community, especially since the highlighting attack that was displayed by police officers in 1991 and the beating of Rodney King. Rodney King is an African American male who was stopped by police for speeding in a predominantly white neighborhood, who was later dragged from his car and beat by multiple police officers for over 9 minutes (Nicholson, 2016, pg. 556). As stated earlier, a witness recorded the entire attack on camera and came forward with excruciating evidence that showed police discrimination and police brutality at its finest. Rodney King is also suggested to be another case like Michael Brown. Michael Brown was another African American male walking home from a gas station that was falsely identified as another African American male and was later shot and killed by police. The facts remain that despite how and why these issues taking place, African Americans cannot enjoy the quality of their lives if they are not allowed to walk around their home neighborhood without being falsely accused of committing crimes, being approached by law enforcement, or being treated unfairly due to the color of their skin.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

In concluding, I must say exploring these variables has allowed me to better understand the negative impact discrimination has on the quality of life of African Americans. The exploration of history helps to understand the challenges and unfair treatment of African Americans depicted in American history. The evidentiary support provided in this research serves the purpose of bringing awareness to issues that negatively affect the quality of lives of African Americans. I urge researchers to continue to engage in research that sheds light on discrimination and its long-lasting impact. My goal is to bring to light many eye-opening experiences, stories, and history to understand the daily struggles of African Americans.

The African American community more recently has been dealing with a slew of discriminatory and profiling problems. The explored variables were intentionally chosen because employment, racial profiling & police brutality, incarceration are all areas where discrimination critically affect the lives of African Americans in safety and overall well-being. Also, when explored are often times when incidents occur are the hardest to prove that discrimination was the only determining factor. Education is an important variable that can determine how children learn; critically think and problem solve and engage with others through their actions and behaviors. Discrimination present in education has the ability to deter students from pursuing other educational goals because of negative experiences. The lack of education and critical thinking skills eliminates the opportunity to seek wealth, goods and services needed in life. Education is the open door for students to gain intrinsic values, happiness, confidence and intellectual ability. Employment has the opportunity to change lives and advance opportunities of wealth, business and financial stability. The inability to secure adequate employment, because of

discrimination restricts one opportunity of happiness and fulfillment. Health services and illness affects when an individual lacks the ability of financial or health resources. The inability to adequate care, services and equipment reduces the ability to improve or decline one's health. Declining health can affect happiness and increase feelings of helpless and vulnerability to unhealthy lifestyle choices. Discrimination from health physicians decreases client's awareness and chances of finding the best care or treatment. Sexuality in references to homosexuality in the African American community resulting from discrimination may result in physical, psychological and mental abuse and mistreatment. One's ability to engage in positive relationship, sexual activity and favors may increase feelings of unhappiness and suicide. Unemployment rates increase the likelihood of poverty, lack of resources and may invoke frustration and deviate behavior in actions and attitudes. Illegal involvement increases risk of incarceration, abandonment to family and future employment opportunities.

Racial profiling for African Americans pursued due to racial discrimination may result in frustration combative behavior to authoritative figures and increase of confrontation. This may lead to deadly outcomes or life changing experiences. Feelings of isolation, insecurities, stress, anxiety and unhappiness negatively affect view of one's self. However, these findings of police brutality while driving while black involves discrimination and mistreatment resulting in imminent danger, excessive force by legal authorities. African Americans may be more inclined to be combative, argumentative, fear, future distrust an uncertainty of one's safety. These many variables when added with discrimination only take away the opportunity to gain and maintain quality of life for the African American community. Has our country taken a step back? Our ability to understand the issues affecting the quality of lives of African Americans allows our country to address these issues directly and minimizes the negative impacts associated with

discrimination. Doing nothing allows the problem to continue to thrive. The inability to work collectively to rectify documented problems destroys the foundation of progression this country has made over the few decades. Are people whom directly discriminate against others worse than those who knowingly sit back and watch and saying nothing at all? The statistical data provided, and documented experiences serves as evidence that action needs to be taken to improve the quality of life of African Americans. When I first begin pondering topics to discuss, I wanted something that was controversial but educating to my audience that we could both learn more about the impacts of discrimination. This research opportunity has allowed me to do that and so much more. I am grateful and humbled. Thank you for embarking on this journey with me as we explored something that has negatively affected the lives of many African Americans. As history continues, and is still being written stay tuned. Future research is to be conducted on the phoneme that investigates trends and other variables that negatively affect the quality of life of African Americans. Why may race determine the content of someone's character before some sort of deviating from society norms occurs? The ability to control, fight, and combat discriminatory actions should be the remedy to decreasing cases of discrimination against all people. So I ask you what will you do moving forward? Does slavery still exist or does America just treat people as if it does?



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