**Interview Transcript**

**Participant 5**

Interviewer: Okay. So, to begin with, I just wanted you to give a little background information about yourself. So, you know, where you're from, what you do for work, maybe a little bit of education and employment history, that kind of thing.

Participant: Okay, um so I was born in Georgia, Duluth area-ish, Duluth, Georgia. My parents actually immigrated from South Korea to the US, so I don't know if that's called like first-generation in the US, or second gen or something like that. But yeah, they came here so that their kids can have like a better life, with more opportunities, I guess. I started working part-time at Publix in junior year of high school, I think I was fifteen or sixteen, and then from that point, I got into UGA and there I also worked at Publix, the one in Athens. And then I went from Publix to delivery driving for a little bit, so like GrubHub, DoorDash, that kind of deal. It wasn't that great. So I moved on to Dominos, and so I delivered pizza and that was a little better, but that was... um... Yeah, okay, I had a Dominos phase. And then after that, I got an internship with Kohl’s, so I got a free trip to New York, something with like NRF foundation, and basically it's like a whole networking program where you get hired for like internships like retail companies that are starting to move towards tech, and so I got an internship at Kohl's. I did that for three months in the summer, and then after that I didn't have a job for like six months, I think? Yeah six months after that... six months, and then I got a scanning job, actually. So I would go around Kroger stores, I forgot the name of the company, but I would go around Kroger stores and I’ll just scan a bunch of products like it was something like really easy. And then, after that I applied to Macy's and I got the job, and here I am today.

Did you want to hear more about education-wise? I studied mechanical engineering for the first year. And then I realized oh it's not that great here at UGA, like it's great, but like I didn't think I was going to be able to do like... I didn't think I was going to overachieve to like where I could do great things with it, so I switched to computer science and I really enjoyed that and I got that degree and now I’m at Macy’s so.

Interviewer: How long have you been at Macy’s?

Participant: um so about a year now, I think sometime this... last year I started. Yeah, so like about a year.

Interviewer: And uh, can you tell me a little bit more about your role at Macy’s and sort of what you do day to day?

Participant: Yeah so, I'm a software engineer, just like the entry-level software engineer position. There, every day, we have a stand-up, so we give our status: what we did yesterday, what we do... what we're gonna do today. I manage a lot of like the Java services. So, a lot of programming and a lot of just communicating with the team, if something goes wrong and we got to hop on that um... I'm also training a new hire as of today. We got a new hire that just graduated from... he just graduated from KSU. So, I'm training him. That's pretty much the gist of it, just like coding, maintaining it, communicating with the team, and like if anyone needs help, we help each other.

Interviewer: And how do you like your job? Do you... if you had to rate it on a scale from one to ten, ten being the best and one being the worst, what would you give your current job?

Participant: Let me get into a... That was (name) just speaking. Sorry. She would probably laugh at this. But um, you asked... scale one to ten of how I like it. I would say, if I'm being really thankful, I would say a ten. Like it's a very relaxed job. All the people, they're like (name), and just everyone... they're very loving, caring people. And, like there's no toxicity in the workplace, there's nothing like that. Everyone works well together, and I really enjoy that. Like I don't find any issues in my day to day. I don't find a lot to complain about. Sometimes we have these big production errors where like, I’ll be on the computer for like... it’s not a normal day, where I would just be constantly doing work and work and work. Like those days kind of suck, so maybe ten to nine if we're including those, but other than that, like everything's great. I really enjoy the job.

Interviewer: Yeah no, that's awesome. That’s a very high number so that's great. What um... In your role, do you interact with other people a lot and are they like colleagues, or are they customers? I don't know if you work with any clients ever?

Participant: Oh sorry, could you rephrase that question or say that question again?

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. Do you interact with other people at your job a lot, and if you do, what kind of people are they? Are they your co-workers? Are they, you know, your managers? Are they your clients or customers?

Participant: Okay got it. So, it's a lot of just... I'm a backend software engineer. So, it's just a lot of the other developers, the testers, the managers, just pretty much everyone. I would say I interact least with the top manager, who like, pretty much leads the team like, does a lot of the business stuff. But no, I interact a lot with everyone. Especially in the stand-up if, like I’ll give my status, and then if anyone has input, they will give me input. I interact the most with other developers and testers. So, I’ll code something and then, maybe with other developers, they’ll input in, and then I’ll send it to the testers, and then they’ll test it, they’ll be like: “how do I do this, how do I do that, and how can I get this test case, etc.” And so yeah. Those are the two types of people I work with the most: testers and developers.

Interviewer: And so, you don't see any particular like customers or anything like that in this job? Obviously, you would have seen them in your other jobs.

Participant: Yeah. No customers.

Interviewer: Um, can you tell me a little... So, are you working remote like full-time right now?

Participant: Yes, fully remote. So,no commute.

Interviewer: And has it been fully remote pretty much since you started?

Participant: Yep, pretty much. I don't think I ever went into the office, really. Except the one time, when I started, I had to get my computer re-imaged because something was wrong.

Interviewer: Sorry,there's a little bit of a lag. So yeah okay, cool um. Okay, so when you're interacting with other people, like other testers and your co-workers, would you consider them your friends or are you friendly with them? Do you guys socialize much outside of work at all? Or do you keep it mostly just business?

Participant: Um so, I'm friendly with them, they're friendly to me. I find it kind of hard to like... like you know, like, with your friends, you'll go out like get drinks, stuff like that. I find it hard to do that because they’re are a lot older than me. The new hire recently, he's like around my age. Maybe we'll start doing stuff like that? I tend to keep work apart.

--internet issues—

Interviewer: Yeah, so the question was just if you interact with your coworkers in like a friendly way or if you socialize with people outside of work?

Participant: Okay yeah. So, I guess my natural tendency is to keep work very separate from like everything else because work is just so time-consuming. I'm actually kind of like going through a little bit of a change, or like, I'm asking myself like why do I keep it so separate? Like, why not like be friends with like the people you work with? And so it's like, it's a changing thing right now, I guess, but as of today it's been very separate for me.

Interviewer: Have you come up with an answer for yourself about why you keep things separate or why you have kept things separate in the past anyway?

Participant: I have not um... I would guess that it's because work is work. Um I like to keep it kind of professional, I guess? And less distractions and so, if I only talk about business stuff, only do business, then that's like... it’ll make better time, more efficiency, I guess, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah sure. Do you feel like other people on your team or other people that you talk to you on a regular basis also abide by that you know? Are they mostly keeping things strictly business professional, or do you feel like other people are, maybe like, friendlier with each other or something?

Participant: Um so, there are a good group of people that also stay like just very business focused. And then there are people that have been at the company for a long time, and they've grown accustomed to each other and like you could tell like they see each other, like out of work and their conversations are much more fruitful. Or not fruitful but like it's good to hear, like it’s very friendly.

Interviewer: And what about for you? Do you feel like at work, you're able to just be yourself, or do you ever find yourself having to act a certain way?

Participant: For the most part, I can be myself. Just with like... There is a difference. Like I won't joke really, I won’t like play around, that kind of thing. Like I’ll try to be more professional.

Interviewer: Is that difficult at all?

Participant: No, not really. The mute button really helps. But it's... Yeah no, it's not like an ongoing effort like: “Okay, be professional, be professional.” Like I could just turn the switch on and off, kind of thing,

Interviewer: That's fair, yeah. How do you like working remote? Is that challenging or what are some of the pros and what are some of the cons that you've come to experience?

Participant: So, work from home is very convenient. More time effective. I don't, there's no commute back and forth. I could cook my lunches instead of meal prepping and having the same meal every day. And a lot, like, I'm not work—I'm not working like eight hours a day, so like sometimes like I recently moved in this past week, I was on mute in most of the calls and I was building furniture, that kind of thing and so that's a big pro. And some cons... I would say I’m meeting less people so like compared to college, I’m like hardly meeting anyone right now because I'm just at home eight hours a day. And so, I feel like going to the workplace, I would probably make friends, I would... Yeah it would just be more fun, I guess, in a way, but more work at the same time to get there and yeah.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. What is the culture or like kind of atmosphere, mood at work? I mean, do you think that it's more like fun, laid back, casual or is it more formal, serious, fast, hierarchical?

Participant: I would, I would say it's very laid back. Like no one's always on you, like: “Do this do that”, or like “You better get this done.” It's more like: “Here's your task, the sprint ends in two weeks every two weeks, make sure to get it done, if you need help, we're here for you.” Very, very laid back. It's not super formal, but there are formalities. Like we're not always talking about, or like they're not always talking about like their day-to-day life and stuff like that, casual conversation.

Interviewer: Sure yeah, can you tell me a little bit more about the demographics of the people you work with and also in the workplace overall, like things like their gender, age, race, ethnicity, anything like that?

Participant: Okay, so I would say on our team at least, we have a pretty even split between men and female. I think there is a little bit more men but women... I don't know why I said men and female. Man and woman. There's slightly less woman. There's a lot of Indians. They're very smart. I think they're very smart people. And there there's a good bit of white people too. And I think I'm the only Asian, or the only Korean least. I haven't met any other like Asian, Chinese Korean, Japanese that sort of deal. It seems to be like only me in that aspect. You said age so, I would say, everyone is a lot older than me except the new hire. He just graduated so yeah, just a lot older than me. It ranges, maybe like late twenties to onwards and upwards. We do have an... When I first joined the company, we had an onboarding experience like an early careers thing, and there's a lot of people my age that I got to meet through there and we have like an ongoing group chat and they're all around my age.

Interviewer: Oh, that's really cool. And how many people do you typically work with and how many people are at your organization overall?

Participant: um I don't know how many people are at our organization. On a day-to-day basis, I’ll maybe work with around ten people that's like an average, sometimes less sometimes more.

Interviewer: Is that always in like a group format, or is it sometimes one on one?

Participant: Sometimes it's group, like right now at least we're in a Zoom call and there's like fifteen of us and we're all just listening in, but most days it’s a lot of just one-on-ones, maybe one-on-twos, stuff like that. Yeah, it varies a lot.

--brief interruption for washer/dryer installation--

Interviewer: Do you feel like your race or your age or your gender matter at work? Or matter how you're viewed at work?

Participant: I feel like age, kind of. I’m semi fresh out of college, a lot of people see me as like the younger new guy that can learn a lot and wants to learn a lot. So, in that aspect everyone almost tries to be a mentor, which I appreciate. And yeah, I feel like that's a very strong dynamic that’s present for me at least.

Interviewer: And then, what about like your gender, your race?

Participant: Um, I don't feel like that has a role at all. I feel like it's mainly just the age.

Interviewer: Cool, yeah. Do you ever experience or have you ever seen anyone else experience any sort of stereotyping, or like racial or gender comments at work?

Participant: Um no. Nothing like that everyone's very kind with each other, very non-toxic workplace.

Interviewer: That's good. Good to hear. So, in this study I'm particularly interested in how people feel and express emotions in the workplace, so it would be helpful to know what kind of person you are emotionally like at work and in general, do you consider yourself to be an emotional person?

Participant: Um, yeah. I feel like every human is an emotional being, like if you're not then you're blocking something that's natural. But yeah, I would say, emotions, they're normal and I definitely have them.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you wear your emotions on your sleeve, or do you tend to be more reserved or private about what you're feeling?

Participant: Definitely more reserved. I'm bit of an introvert so I tend to keep those shelled in.

Interviewer: Yeah. What about other people you know? Would they describe you as an emotional person?

Participant: Depends who you ask. So, I guess like my close guy and girlfriends, they'll say yes definitely. And a lot of just like my other friends know I'm kind of like the quiet guy almost. Like I don't really express myself a lot. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. It's weird, it's on and off.

Interviewer: What about the people you work with? do any of them ever get emotional or do they seem like emotionally easy to read, or is it more of the opposite?

Participant: That's a hard question uh. Do they show a lot of emotion? Is that what you’re asking? I guess sometimes, like: “Oh this this stupid thing won’t work,” or like “Oh, I'm stressed.” Kind of. Yeah, I feel like there's like a healthy amount of emotion sharing throughout the workplace.

Interviewer: Do you personally ever feel like emotionally exhausted or experienced any burnout at work?

Participant: Sometimes I’ll get really stressed like when there's a production issue and I’m like working constantly and constantly, yes. After I get off work, I’ll just be fried. I won't do anything else, I’ll just lie on the couch that sort of thing. But most days, no.

Interviewer: Most days no. So, this is only when you have like a lot of work going on or like a big project or something.

Participant: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: Do you ever talk about your stress level or you're like feeling overworked or anything to any of your colleagues?

Participant: Actually, yes. Yes, I do. Like on a one-on-one with like one of my mentors, I’ll be like “God, this is so stressful” or like “This is very difficult” or like “why won't this work?” or if something breaks, I’ll be like: “Oh I'm freaking out. What do we do?”, that sort of thing.

Interviewer: And they seem pretty receptive to that? Or they also reciprocate?

Participant: Yeah. They’ll try to make it better.

Interviewer: Cool. Can you think of any times when you felt particularly emotional? And this can be any kind of emotions, you can be worried, you could be excited or happy, you know, sad or angry or irritable.

Participant: So, I hope you don't tell (name) anything but there’s...

Interviewer: I won’t tell anybody anything. This is top secret.

Participant: Okay. It doesn't have to do with her, but there's one specific tester. He doesn't work hard enough, I guess. Or like I’ll give him something to test, and he won't even try to figure some things out by himself, which he could do, he is capable of, i've seen it. So that kind of frustrates me. He's asking me: “How do I do this specifically?” or no, no... Let me rephrase that. I think him asking questions is a good thing, but like he'll sometimes be like “this won’t work”... like “this won’t work’ and then that's it. He has nothing to say after that and he won't like take ownership of it. And yeah, that's what frustrates me the most.

Interviewer: When that happens, when you're working with this tester or yeah and he's just not doing what he's supposed to be doing like, how do you react usually? Do you say anything to him? Like what's your response?

Participant: Okay, so my immediate response is anger and frustration. Like “Why? Why are you doing this to me?”, but I never show that. I try to be respectful of everyone, and I won’t like... I think a good phrase in life is “don't act on anger”, so I don't like shout at him, cuss him out, stuff like that. So, I’ll just keep working with them until everything is resolved, and so yeah. I just tolerate it, yeah.

Interviewer: Do you do anything in particular to help manage your anger when that happens, or? I guess thinking of that quote...

Participant: So I have this, like a grip strength thing. It's like a stress relief, it's yeah. (shows me the grip device he squeezes when he is stressed).

Interviewer: Yeah, no that works. And you feel like that's helpful?

Participant: Yeah, it keeps my mind kind off of what I'm feeling almost, mellows it out.

Interviewer: Cool, yeah. Can you think of any other times or scenarios of like where you felt maybe some particular type of emotion at work?

Participant: Some other types of emotion? Maybe when we do like a big release, and nothing goes wrong. There’s a lot of joy and happiness. We're like in a celebratory mood like: “Oh good job everyone. Good job, good job. You did great.” We’re just handing out compliments, that sort of thing. I really enjoy that.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's great. Do you feel like you're able to express, you know, happiness too at work or do you have to kind of sensor constraint that too?

Participant: Oh, I feel like I do a good job of just showing like, if I show... I don't hold back happiness. When it happens, it happens, I don't... I can't recall any time where I'm like restraining it, like I’ll show it, I’ll say nice things to people. I’ll be like “we did it!” or something like that, yeah. I guess, create kind of like the vibe of happiness if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Sure yeah um. So, in the past couple of years, there have been some incidents of like Asian Americans experiencing violence. I don't know if you've seen any of that in the news at all. Have you been affected by that at all, and has anybody talked about that at your company?

Participant: At my company, no. Amongst my friends, very rarely. Maybe, I can only think of like one instance. What was the first part of the question that you asked?

Interviewer: Do you feel affected by that at all?

Participant: Do I feel affected by that? Um, like kind of, yes. It's almost like our race has been targeted for something that we were never in charge of. It is racism almost, or yeah, it is racism. It's unfair for us. Like I try to be empathetic with like the Black community as well, what they're going through with like the cops and their interactions with that. Based on what the media is showing, I don't know how viable that is, cops are definitely more biased towards white people than black people and that, that angers me. Like, why is the world like this? The world is messed up place, I don't want to be here—that kind of thing. So yes, I am affected by that. I get frustrated and angry at the world.

Interviewer: Does that ever carry over at all into like, you know, your work environment or who you are when you show up at your job.

Participant: I would say no, not at all.

Interviewer: Because you check it at the door sort of thing or just...

Participant: I try not to think about it. It’s... work is work, focus on your work. Focus, I think that's a good thing.

Interviewer: Is that ever difficult to like, make sure that you're just focused on work?

Participant: Is it difficult to focus on work?

Interviewer: Well, to just be focused on work and check the other things, you know.

Participant: I wouldn't say it's difficult. Because I don't know if this is a crappy thing to say, but it's not directly affecting... When I say it, I mean like Asian Americans, like the racism with that. It's not directly affecting my everyday life, and so it's not like I'm thinking about it every day. When I see it in the news, maybe I’ll think about it for the day but as life continues, it doesn't really come up in my head.

Interviewer: Sure. What about anything related to the pandemic? Have you have you felt like covid has impacted, you know, your job life at all other than being remote?

Participant: Um, my job life. Yes, because I can't meet people like the way we used to. Everything is from Zoom call, or not Zoom, Teams. The cameras tend to always be off, so I can't really see any faces. And yeah, it's affected in that way. Other than that I wouldn't say anything else, anything that I can think of off top my head right now.

Interviewer: So is there anything else about your workplace or your current job that we haven't discussed that you'd want to talk about?

Participant: Um... Not that I could think of its... I guess work is just like a very simple thing for me. It just work. I have to get it done to live, pay rent. You know, nothing else other than that. It's just very simple.

Interviewer: What about your...Can you talk to me a little bit about your former jobs? Like where you were you were listing off, you know, having worked at Publix and working as a delivery driver, and working at, did you say Kohls?

Participant: Yeah. Kohl’s. I had an internship there.

Interviewer: Right and then the Kroger scanning and whatnot. Like comparatively, would you say that, like working in those positions was easier or harder? And did you ever feel any particular emotions at those jobs?

Participant: Okay yeah so definitely harder because I'm being paid a lot less and I still have to keep up with similar bills. And so that created a lot of stress for me. Having to work more hours almost, not more hours I'm like full time now, but realistically I'm not working, eight hours a day. Whereas like, if I worked eight hours at a Public shift, I’ll be working eight hours constantly, so definitely harder in that aspect. I don't have to deal with customers anymore, and don't get me wrong, there were great customers, but there are also very toxic customers that like “wow you're having a really bad day and you're putting it all on me”, that kind of thing. And that was annoying. So, I don't deal with customers anymore um. What else... I would say working in those past jobs was easier on the mental aspect, as in like I have to think less. It's more of just like hands-on doing, I have to do this, do that. Less thought-provoking. I have to think less so it's easier in that aspect yeah.

Interviewer: Sure. um whether it was with customers or with other people you were working with did you ever experience any like different treatment because of your race or anything like that?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: At the previous job, yeah.

Participant: I forgot to mention I worked at Olive Garden for a year. Yeah. It's a different demographic there. There's definitely more racist people there, so like based on like my age, how I look, my race. They would definitely like make these like racial slurs.

Interviewer: Like actual slurs? What kind of things did they say?

Participant: Like Ching Chong, like that sort of thing. whoa wait that's what are they yeah it's annoying.

Interviewer: This was with customers or other people that you worked with?

Participant: People I worked with. And then the same thing with the customers. Not the same thing, but there were good customers and bad customers. There are two. So the other workplaces, I would say nothing like that. It was just all Olive Garden specifically. Where like I don’t know, my coworkers were a bit toxic. There were good coworkers, but others like, wow.

Interviewer: What did you react with when that happened?

Participant: I just ignored it and I continued working doing my job.

Interviewer: Was that difficult at all?

Participant: Yes, initially, but it got easier. I got used to it, like “oh that's new”. Yeah.

Interviewer: Got it, yeah. This was in Athens or this was in Atlanta?

Participant: Athens.

Interviewer: This was in Athens, yeah. Do you think that had anything to do with it too or no?

Participant: Um... Maybe? Maybe not? I'm not too... I know what Athens like demographic looks like, but I don't really know, like the stats are like... um no, I would say, like the demographic at like UGA at least, I didn't really get much like racism or anything like that. I'm not too sure if the area had anything to do with it.

Interviewer: It was just Olive Garden.

Participant: Yeah, I hate Olive Garden.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Wow, yeah. Um well, those are pretty much all my questions. Let me scroll through and see if there was anything that I missed. Um, but yeah is there anything else that you would want to talk about, or yeah anything that came up while you were talking.

Participant: Nothing right now. Yeah, no. This was fun though.

Interviewer: Yeah. Thank you well, thank you so much. Yeah, I really appreciate your participation. Um I guess there's two other things that... Oh, I can stop the recording, though.