**Interview Transcript**

**Participant 7**

Interviewer: Okay, so to begin with, my first question is just can you introduce yourself and tell me a little bit about who you are, you know, where you're from and maybe some of your education and employment history.

Participant 7: sure um so I'm [Participant 7] and I am currently a rising third year at Emory in the psychology department. I'm pursuing a degree in clinical psychology.

I am originally from San Diego, California. I did my bachelor's at UCSD in psychology and then I did my masters in psychology and behavior on cognitive neuroscience at San Diego State University. Um I took a break between my—between graduating from undergrad in 2014 and starting the master's program in 2017 and I worked at a uh construction company in HR in Boston. And then after I graduated from my masters and before starting at Emory, I took a year off and worked at a biotech company as a study coordinator in San Diego.

Interviewer: Great, yeah, um. So, for this interview, I will be asking questions about your job, and you can feel free to switch back and forth between experiences that you've had um or you can choose one that you think would be the one you want to like talk about the most or whatnot, as well. It sounds like you have like a few different experiences very um... and some of them might even be applicable to the program you're in because you do clinical practitioner-based stuff, right?

Participant 7: Yes

Interviewer: so. Yeah, yeah so some of these questions will just be broadly applicable to like different roles that you've played but um, can you tell me for the construction company and for the biotech company like what your roles were and a little bit more about the organization.

Participant 7: yeah, so at the construction company, I was an HR coordinator, um so I helped with recruiting for their co-op program and recruiting for their full-time employment job opportunities, as well. Um I also handled all of their benefits um. And enrolling and terminating any employees. And then I also, at one point in time, helped out with some of the payroll. But that was largely, yeah, my job and then any other miscellaneous tasks that the HR generalist—my boss—would ask me to cover or do, so like whether that was like putting on workshops or things like that. As far as—do you... What do you mean by the um, did you say the structure of the company, sorry?

Interviewer: Well, no, just a little bit about the organization like maybe how big it was, or what kind of organization it was.

Participant 7: Okay yeah it was a mid-sized company, it was owned by three brothers. Um yeah so it was like a very Italian family. And then, as far as the biotech company, it was a small company. I worked as a study coordinator, so my job was to review all of the study protocols. So um essentially it was oncology biotech, so we worked with bigger pharmaceutical companies and ran their protocols testing out their drugs. So it was the role of the study coordinator to review all the protocols, create any of the study related material, and then be in the vivarium with the RAs to help just with any milestone of the project. So whether or not that was like the first dosing, um any tissue collection, or taking down the colonies, um yeah, and then just managing the study from start to finish.

Interviewer: got it very cool um. And you said you were there for one year and you were at the construction company for three years.

Participant 7: I think that I, so I temped for them before I was hired as a full-time, so I probably was there more so for like two years.

Interviewer: Two years okay got it yeah. So, in these roles were you interacting with other people a lot? I would imagine yes um. But, can you tell me like in what capacity you were interacting with people, and this could be clients or like customers, or it could have been coworkers.

Participant 7: yeah I would say in both settings it was primarily working with um my coworkers, I very rarely had to interact with the clients at the biotech and I never interacted with the clients at the construction company. Um so it was mainly just working a lot with my coworkers, whether it was like to understand what they were looking for out of their employer, like who they're seeking, or for their co-op program, discussing benefits with them. A lot of people had questions about like what the best plan was to enroll in or like what a 401k was um. And then at the biotech, it was a lot about coordinating with each other and it was more so a team environment. And the HR role was very much like an individual—I worked in tandem with my boss, but that was like our team.

Interviewer: yeah, yeah sure. And how was your boss in that role, did you guys get along, um did you feel like it was a really friendly, casual relationship or did it seem really professional or serious.

Participant 7: yeah I think I got very, very lucky with my boss um I'm still really close friends with her even though I left um a while ago. Yeah, she was a huge support to me when I moved to Boston; I was in a pretty abusive relationship and so, she was the first person that I really opened up to and she helped me through a lot of that, while still navigating like starting in HR for the first time and not really knowing what I was doing.

Interviewer: cool well that's great that you lucked out and then um—What about your other Co workers um, I guess more particularly in the biotech company, where you were working with like—were you working with the same group of people all the time, or?

Participant 7: um yes every study coordinator was assigned to a team, and so we worked with our team on every project, um so we stuck together. I worked with probably for six months, I worked with one team and then for six months, I worked with another team while I was there.

Interviewer: got it, and how big were the teams?

Participant 7: I want to say there were—there was one study coordinator per team, and probably... actually one study coordinator and you usually worked with maybe two or three study directors who would um like they were the client-facing role and then probably five to six RAs.

Interviewer: gotcha. Um so were you all close, did you hang out ever outside of work, um what kinds of conversations did you have? Were they like friendly or did you feel like they were, you know, you had to keep things strictly professional business.

Participant 7: It was uh very friendly. I'll say that with the study directors, it was more professional and business, uh but still very friendly. And with the RAs and the other study coordinators, it was very friendly, more so like we were talking to like a friend that we've known for a while, rather than a coworker. A lot of people were unhappy at this company, so a lot of the times, it was a lot of complaining or just listening to complaints um. But yeah, we ate lunch together all the time, we had a big, shared office so we like—we were very accustomed to spending time with each other.

Interviewer: What were some of the complaints that people had about the company, like why were people so unhappy?

Participant 7: Yeah um just understaffed, so really long hours and taking on responsibilities that weren't necessarily in your job description, um. A lot of lack of communication, um a lot of people were very unhappy with the upper-upper ahead management and just like what kind of decisions they chose to make. A lot of the RAs were also very unhappy with their pay and how promotions worked within the company. But I think that it was really unique for me because I knew that I wasn't going to be staying there, I already had my offer from Emory. So, all of the things that, you know, bother people who were there for like their career or like trying to establish a start point um didn't bother me because I knew I wasn't going to stay there, anyway.

Interviewer: Oh sure if that makes sense. Um for the time that you were there, how would you describe your job satisfaction, like on a scale from one to 10 with 10 being the best and one being the worst? And same question about the HR role.

Participant 7: For the biotech company I think if I took out like the friendliness of everything um I’d probably give my job satisfaction like a six, just because animal research has never really been something that I particularly enjoyed, um it was something that I already had experience with so I knew it was something I could do um. But I would say, like the job in itself was not like especially fulfilling or enjoyable, but with the friendship that my coworkers brought, it made my day to day much better. Um in HR I would say, when I first started out I'll say my job satisfaction was probably like an eight, but the longer that I was there I became more progressively unhappy; and it was just because I didn't find it very challenging, I didn't get much fulfillment out of it, and I had the feeling that it wasn't something that I wanted to do long term, but I was still navigating like what my next step was. So, I'll say like my last year there, I was probably at a 5 or 4.

Interviewer: yeah, um were you open with your supervisor about this, or was that more or something that you just kind of privately were feeling?

Participant 7: I would say more privately feeling um. I was very protective of like uh, I wasn't sure—this was like my first real, corporate job and so I didn't know how open I could be about like my desire to leave, but not really knowing like when or what it would be that I was leaving for. So I kept that to myself until I, like, decided what exactly it was going to be doing and starting that process.

Interviewer: Sure, sure, what about... I mean it sounds like you were talking about how your supervisor was um supportive in other ways as well, like with personal matters. Is that something that you found was pretty easy to talk with her about or um did that take time or were there certain things that you didn't want to discuss with your supervisor?

Participant 7: yeah so she's uh really open, she's like an open book and we would often have lunch together and she would like tell me about her own personal life and like her dating, like, stories and stuff like that. So I think the more that I like got the sense that she was you know really open about her life and I gained that comfort and trust that like it was okay to reciprocate with my own stories, that's when I started to tell her more. But it did take a while before like I knew it was probably okay to do that, but from the get-go, she really shared a lot with me.

Interviewer: yeah, sure, that would definitely make people feel more comfortable too probably um. Can you tell me a little bit more about the demographic makeup of the people at your two jobs?

Participant 7: yeah, um at my construction company, I would say it was like 95% white, um I think I was the only Asian person there um uh yeah. And then at my biotech company, I will say it was more diverse, but I was still maybe—there were only maybe 4 Asian people there, 4 or 5, yeah so still fairly limited.

Interviewer: Sure, four or five out of a company that was what size again? You said...

Participant 7: It was on the small size yeah, and that was only for the San Diego branch, so there was also Louisiana branch and I'm not sure what the demographic was there.

Interviewer: got it, yeah. Was it hard being like the only Asian person at the HR company or did that ever make you feel weird or anything like that?

Participant 7: Yeah, it was, I—Boston already was kind of um I just didn't feel 100% comfortable in Boston already, I'll say around like where Harvard and MIT and where the universities are, there was a lot more diversity, but in general I just felt like Boston was so lacking in diversity. So I already felt kind of unease in living there, and then going to a company, where I was the only Asian person was really uncomfortable; it like made me very aware of my own race. Yeah.

Interviewer: Did anything ever happen that like reminded you of that more or where that stood out or was that just mostly something you just kind of felt on a regular basis?

Participant 7: I think something I more so felt on a regular basis. I won't—I'll say that people did not treat me like any different by any means um. And that was, I think, really surprising given like the culture of what construction could be like. I think if I went out into the field, it would have been more different. But I think working in the office alone, like only, helps with not necessarily experiencing so much like I don't know racism or just like people noticing my race and making comments about it.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. What were the gender in like age dynamics like we're for the two companies?

Participant 7: yeah so for the HR company I'll say was actually a younger—both companies actually were on the younger side um the management for both companies were older, of course, but like for the makeup of like everyone else, very much like young adults, working professionals. At the construction company, predominantly male probably like 70% male. And then at the biotech company um I'll say it was a good spread, probably still favoring males, but there were more females than at my construction company.

Interviewer: cool yeah, um did—to what extent would you say at these companies that you felt like you could be yourself?

Participant 7: um. It's hard to say, because I think when I was working at the HR company, I was really lost in like who I was, and then also being the only Asian person, not having friends there besides like my boss and a couple coworkers, so I felt really uncomfortable like and just like not understanding who I was there. So, like I don't know if I ever really felt like I was myself working at HR or the construction company. And then the biotech company, I felt very comfortable being myself. I think I'm definitely already a slow to warm up person, I'm not really someone that off the bat will be herself or like be very open. I've always tried to be very friendly but I'm not—I can be very closed, I'm closed off at first, so it did take a few months before I like really allowed people to get to know me and like showed my real personality.

Interviewer: sure, um, lets' see. So, in this study I'm particularly interested in how people feel and express their emotions at work. So first off, it would be helpful to know like what kind of person you are emotionally, so how would you describe yourself emotionally, and do you consider yourself an emotional person or more reserved?

Participant 7: Um this is like strictly in the professional setting, or are you asking more generally? Because I'll say that I'm different.

Interviewer: Um it can be both. Oh okay yeah.

Participant 7: Okay um with my friends, I am more emotional, with my family I'm very emotional, I'm very—I'm a sensitive person and I'm more willing to express my emotions to my family or my close friends. Professionally, I am not emotional at all, I don't express my emotions to people, I just—I have a hard time building up that level of trust. I will say my boss is probably the *only* person at that company that I like was willing to share my emotions with but that's—that's it. At the biotech company I didn't share my emotions with anyone.

Interviewer: What about the other people around you? Would you say—I mean working in HR you probably did get to see people get emotional at points. What was that like, and yeah I mean can you just describe what that was like?

Participant 7: yeah um definitely in HR, yes people came to us with all sorts of like concerns or problems um. And that was my first time really working with people uh, in general like that, so it at first was really uncomfortable. I just didn't really know what the best way to comfort someone was or like what the appropriate thing to say was. But I think the more comfort I built up in my role there and getting to know my coworkers, I think I handled it better. But I don't mind other people bringing their emotions to me, my reservation is with people seeing mine.

Interviewer: When people see yours. Can you tell me a little bit more why that is something that you've you tried to, you know, hold back on? Is there an experience that you've had or that's just sort of you know what you think the expectation is or?

Participant 7: yeah, I think I think it's more of an expectation, maybe from myself, but it just seems like burdensome to, you know, put that onto someone that maybe doesn't even really know me that well, or I don't know how they would feel handling that type of emotion um. And it just feels—I don't know if it's like, it's kind of a mixture of like inappropriate and weak, like it just doesn't feel like the setting to show people that, you know, you're struggling or you know something's going on.

Interviewer: sure, yeah, yeah. Did you ever feel like emotionally exhausted, or experienced burnout at work?

Participant 7: yeah definitely. I'll say um more so in the program that I'm at right now, I think because I'm dealing with other people's emotions so much more frequently now um than I was in HR or the biotech company, so I will say my burnout is the worst in this program. Um I think the burnout at the biotech company, I think by the end of it, I was starting to feel it a bit more just because being around animals and in that type of setting was really hard to see and uh. I had deferred from Emory because my mom had passed away from cancer, so being around cancer studies like that, it was really hard for me like as I was still actively grieving, so I think that contributed to it as well. At the HR company, um definitely experienced some burnout but I don't think to the extent that I did at the biotech or now.

Interviewer: Or now. Yeah um, can you tell me a little bit more about this current program and um what you do and sort of what the dynamics are there?

Participant 7: yeah so um it's a five year program typically, and so the first year was all classes and research, uh the second year we get introduced into the clinic and we start seeing clients, so we have our clinical responsibilities, still research responsibility, like classes, and then also TA-ing. And then during the third year we also have all of those responsibilities, plus an external practicum, so now we're serving as clinicians out into the community at a different site, as well as in the clinic upstairs. Um so that's where I'm at in the program now, and then as far as like the structure for our clinical responsibilities we report to a supervisor, and your supervisor, you have a different supervisor for therapy assessment and stress clinic. So you might have anywhere from 2 to 3 supervisors depending on if, like your stress clinic supervisor is the same as you know—just like the mixture of it all. And then, for research we report to our PI um yeah. Is that everything that you needed?

Interviewer: yeah, sure um, with the offsite clinical training that you're doing, where is that, what kind of setting is that?

Participant 7: yeah so we can choose, depending on our interests and what we want to gain more exposure in. So the site that I specifically chose is more of an assessment-based uh site, and it is working with families uh and their kids who might have been exposed to drugs prenatally um and trying to either give them a diagnosis or assess them for any sort of deficits— whether it's like cognitive or learning or motor—and then determining the best accommodations for them.

Interviewer: got it, yeah, so um in this current program with all the different components, sort of similar question, like how frequently do you interact with your colleagues and with clients and um do you ever feel like it's emotionally like... Well, I guess you already said that you felt burnout and emotionally exhausted, can you tell me a little bit more about that, and what you think the context is that that comes out in the most?

Participant 7: yeah um I see my clients once every week and then, as far as like we... when we have classes together, I see my cohort more frequently and on a day to day when we don't have classes, I don't see them as often I see my lab mates a lot more. And I share an office, so I see my officemate like every day, and we text all the time too, so we're just always on each other's space and business. And then I see my PI once a week and then we see our supervisors once a week as well. And then, yes, I think I definitely get emotionally just burnout from the clinical work. I think it's a combination of the clinical work and research in particular. I will say that my PI, um he's not a clinician, so it's difficult for him to understand some of the clinical responsibilities. So sometimes his research expectations are really challenging to balance with what we have to do in every other role we act as. Even outside of just the research which is all that he really sees and seems to, at times, care about. And so I think my biggest thing is when there's like that clash between what he's asking and what I need to balance gets a little too much, um I get a lot of burnout. And it's really hard for me to feel like I'm being an adequate therapist or like being present enough for my clients when I feel like I'm at my end.

Interviewer: yeah do you do you ever talk to him about that, or do you ever say anything, or is that something that you feel like you kind of have to just keep to yourself?

Participant 7: it's something that I feel I need to keep to myself yeah.

Interviewer: Do you know if other people in your program feel the same way or if they have like similar relationships with their PIs?

Participant 7: I think that a lot of the other students are lucky in the sense that they have clinicians as their PIs. So they have a better understanding of the balance, and they've also been acting as a PI for longer than mine has, um so they just have more experience in general, mentoring students and helping them through the program. So I think that—and other people also have better relationships with their PIs, not all, but a good majority of them do so—I think that it might be easier for other people in my cohort to need to have those conversations and be able to, and some of them might not even need to because their PIs are kind of already aware of the obligations that we have.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah that makes sense. Um is your department um pretty diverse, racially gender wise, age wise, or is it skewed one way?

Participant 7: yeah it's skewed I'll say that it's predominantly female in the um clinical program, at the very least. And a huge lack of diversity, to be honest, like both—I'll say amongst the students it's so much better—but amongst the staff it's very white, yeah.

Interviewer: yeah, yeah. Does that ever have um like, I don't know, a direct impact or consequences that you can see that come out during the work, or not really?

Participant 7: yeah we've definitely had um a few instances in our classes where we felt like something the professor said probably wasn't the most appropriate, like to people uh minorities, and things like that. So, in that sense, like just hearing the inappropriate at times can be difficult. I'll say in terms of my training um I think that they've done a much—well, from what I've heard through the grapevine, I think that they've done a much better job of trying to incorporate diversity training within our clinical training um. But I think that it's also hard to do if you don't necessarily have people of color um helping like, you know, spearhead what that training might look like, what might be important to communicate to the students and things like that, um so I think that they're doing the best that they can, given the makeup of the faculty that are trying to now incorporate this. And I'll also say that, at times, it gets hard with clients, because we want to be really mindful of people's cultural experiences, but that can be challenging if your supervisor might not be able to speak on that culture or help you understand what a minority’s experience might be like, and how that might be impacting their mental health or their day to day.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. Do you ever feel like personally your race matters with how you're viewed at work, in any of the capacities?

Participant 7: um sometimes I do, sometimes um it's—I think that you know I fill a diversity, like, slot for them. Because they're—you know, I'm Japanese and Asian, in the broader scope, and there aren't a lot of uh Asian people in general in Georgia, so at times I do feel like I kind of just tick off that box, of like cool we have this girl that's uh added diversity to our program, that looks really good on us. And, on the other side, I also feel like as an Asian person, I feel sometimes ignored or left out of that diversity conversation. I think that my program really focuses on Black and Latin American experiences and a lot of the times forget about the fact that Asian American experiences are also quite different and are being impacted in the US as well, given, like all the COVID stuff and just everything that's been going on. So at times I feel like it's for a benefit for the program and then other times I feel like we're really ignored.

Interviewer: Can you can you think of any times when like specific examples of something that might have happened that made you feel that more acutely? Either the ticking the diversity box part, or feeling like you are not considered a minority.

Participant 7: yeah I think uh when I felt it the most was uh the psychology program was doing a big diversity hire. And in looking at like the candidates that they invited, it was all Asian and uh Black, um so I was like okay like I realized that I'm just like kind of this diversity tick box for this department, like this is kind of all that they see me as. And then, as far as kind of being ignored, I think it largely comes from conversations of like, “We really need to support this group of people in this climate and in this day and age.” And I never speak up about it because I just don't feel comfortable, but a lot of the times I want to—I feel like saying like, you know, it's important to also not forget about the Asian American experience because it's also being impacted, even if we might not hear about it as much or it doesn't feel as necessary or present.

Interviewer: yeah. With like the AAPI hate and like violence that has occurred and other things during COVID, has anything been different for you in terms of work or have you felt like your company did anything, or your organization, your department did anything in relation to that.

Participant 7: I'll say that the biggest thing for me was my concern about acting as a clinician out in the community. Um I felt really protected and safe in the clinic just because I know I have so much support and the clinic staff is so great that I like—I felt really comfortable going forward working with individuals that come there. My concern was about going out into the community and not knowing how people might feel about working with an Asian individual, especially during this time where like, you know, COVID is still present and people have very different opinions about it. And I'm really grateful to say that like I haven't experienced any sort of negativity or resistance from people wanting or willing to work with me—but that was my biggest concern about what it might be like once I actually am out in the real world working as a clinician.

Interviewer: When you say you were concerned about people wanting to work with you, do you mean like because people had associated COVID with being Asian or—

Participant 7: Yeah.

Interviewer: yeah, okay.

Participant 7: yeah and just yeah negative views that people had.

Interviewer: What about, I mean I know we've seen on the news um an uptick in some of the like hate crimes or violence. Did that impact you at all?

Participant 7: Yes, I have already been a really like cautious person. I am very vigilant whenever I go out and, I've always been that way, but I'll say that it's gotten a lot worse, and I don't know if it's because I don't feel very safe in Georgia in general, um coming from Southern California, where it's very diverse and it just feels a little bit more safe. So, I don't know if it's a function of just being in Georgia um, or if it is the combination of like being in Georgia, plus all of these like Asian hate crimes occurring at same time, but I feel like my vigilance has been even more heightened. And I don't even go outside without my boyfriend like I don't even go out to the grocery store by myself, like, I am very uh uneasy doing that alone.

Interviewer: Sure. Yeah, no, I can—I can relate to that somewhat, yeah. Can you think of any times when you felt particularly emotional at work, um and this can be any emotion, it can be you know, like anxious, worried, excited, upset, angry, irritable?

Participant 7: I'll say that I think I just run really high on anxiety already so I'll say there hasn't been a day—even at my HR company, at the biotech, here—where I haven't been very anxious. I always operate on like anxiety.

Interviewer: yeah are there times when that felt even more acute or anything that you can think of where that came out more?

Participant 7: um, I think—and I think this is a really normal experience—but like in like, you know, giving the defenses, giving oral presentations, those are when like my anxiety is really, really heightened. Outside of that I'll say I've had a couple of difficult clients and working in that setting has also led to some high anxiety and just general worry. But other than that, yeah, I would say that's about it.

Interviewer: Is it difficult working with clients and having, you know, their emotions come out during sessions and whatnot and do you feel like you have to act a certain way?

Participant 7: yeah I'll say I'm okay with, you know, the general like crying or like getting very like worked up. But I had a client that really started to kind of personally attack me, and that was the most challenging for me. I had a really hard time navigating how to like not react to that and how to like defuse the situation.

Interviewer: Did that make you feel emotional at all when that happened and did you express it in any way?

Participant 7: I'll say it made me feel emotional after. I called my lab me and I was just crying because I was so overwhelmed, and I had never been kind of attacked in that way, not from someone that I had really purely tried to help. And so it was really disappointing on my side that that was their experience. And just—I felt really helpless and so I called her crying and then, when I had to meet with my supervisor, I also ended up crying [laugh].

Interviewer: But they were okay with that.

Participant 7: Yes, they were very, very, very supportive and that's probably the only time that I had like let my emotions—let like those types of emotions affect me in a way that, like, I had to express it.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. What about like other people in your program, um is this like a common occurrence or... or do you see other people deal with difficult clients, or you know, breakdown?

Participant 7: I don't think I've seen anyone in my cohort. I have seen my lab mate, but again I think it's because we see each other like every single day for like eight hours a day, and then we text each other. So we've definitely seen each other's emotions more regularly than I think anyone else in the cohort.

Interviewer: Sure yeah. So those are the majority of my questions, I think, is there anything else about your workplace or about the different places that you've worked that we haven't discussed that you would want to talk about?

Participant 7: I don't think so.

Interviewer: cool and then I just have a few demographic questions that if they haven't already come up with the—well, where are you located, you’re located in Atlanta. And were born in Southern California.

Participant 7: Yes, yeah but my parents were not. I'm a first generation.

Interviewer: You’re first generation okay, wait so, where were your parents born?

Participant 7: Japan.

Interviewer: They were both born in Japan okay um, can you tell me your age, do you mind?

Participant 7: Yeah I'm 30.

Interviewer: You’re 30. And your gender pronouns.

Participant 7: Um she/her/hers yeah.

Interviewer: got it cool well, thank you very much. yeah that's that's pretty much it for for now. i'm still hoping to interview more people, though, so I don't know if you have any other people, you could recommend and you might be willing to be interviewed.

Participant 7: um do they have to be local in Georgia.

Interviewer: No, not at all.

Participant 7: Oh okay um do you know if, or do you still have like a thing that I can like send out to my friends. yeah because if they don't have to be local I can definitely reach out to some people and see if they'd be willing.

Interviewer: Sure yeah that would be great I can send you a flyer yeah I have your email, so I can send it to you, there would that work.

Participant 7: yeah that's perfect.

Interviewer: Okay cool great oh sorry, let me stop this recording also.