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ABSTRACT

In this research, I collected and analyzed data that tests whether respondents would reject a qualified applicant due to stereotyping by name. With one glance at the name on the résumé, the employer can infer racial/ethnic stereotypes. For example, a name such as Clark Hall would potentially indicate a white male. Though the initial reaction to screening names on résumés may not be racially/ethnically pronounced, the subconscious biases may affect the employer's judgments in a decision supposedly based on qualifications. This study identifies the psychological reasons behind ethnic/racial biases by using college students from a very diverse campus with large number of respondents from Black and Hispanic backgrounds. The experiment asked them to select the best 'candidate' for a fictitious banker position. My findings show 61% chose the most qualified candidate, the candidate who met the requirements, and the candidate with the subpar experience, correctly. I found that 39% of participants chose the wrong candidate. These results were further analyzed, separating these responses by ethnic/racial background.

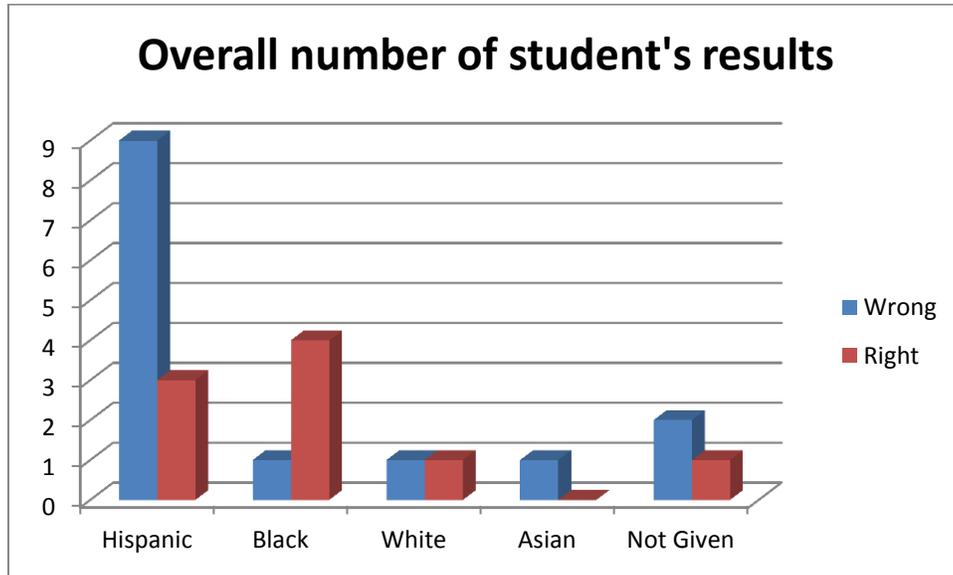
HIRING BIASES: GENDER AND NAMES

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CSUDH Experiment Response

Twenty-three California State University Dominguez Hills students reviewed, three mock résumés with three male, ethnic/racially stereotypical names being the only identifier, minus pure qualifications, presented. The twenty-three students ranked the candidates by the best candidate for a call-back, the candidate who simply met the prerequisites, and the candidate who had the weakest résumé. The candidates' rankings were predetermined by a Human Resource student, professor, and research specialists, and then matched with the students' response. This study resulted in more preferred rankings for African American and Hispanic sounding candidates' name. The limitation faced was the demographic of the students. CSUDH holds a diverse population of students, but the majority of students come from African American and Hispanic backgrounds.

In Table 1.1 below, I show the number of participants who were wrong in choosing their preferred, passing, and weakest candidates, and those who were right.



After analyzing those who were not correct in their assessment, my results showed that both; Black and Hispanic minorities chose either White or their own ethnicity as the preferred and or passing candidate. There were also the participants of one minority, choosing the other minority as the second best choice. After speaking with each participant immediately after the experiment, asking the same question, “Why did you choose the candidate that you have chosen for the preferred and weakest?” Many of the participants were not immediately aware of the name on the resume, until after they had read through each candidate’s qualifications. Thirty percent of participants admitted to glancing at the name and thinking about the external skills that could benefit the company, such as “Juan Garcia”, the Hispanic candidate, possibly being bilingual, even though it was not known. A staggering 10% of participants admitted to only focusing on qualifications, where names on résumés did not stand out at all. Latreasha, an African American Communications student stated, “...was at first going with Darnell [Q. Johnson] to give him a chance because he’s a brotha”. After analyzing her decisions, it showed that she was correct with choosing the Hispanic candidate as the preferred candidate, but the eraser markings of her original first choice, (Darnell- Black candidate), remained. Though her initial choice could indicate a bias, there

is still little proof of the intent behind the decision, thus acknowledging more limitations in such research.

In a similar study by Thomas E. Ford, the pre interview bias took place amongst two very similar résumés. One résumé belonged to an African American male, while the other was a Caucasian male, applying for the same sales position. During the pre interview process, the Caucasian candidate received more “positive recommendations” than the African American. Once the managers’ biases were revealed, they quickly switched to more favorable opinions towards subsequent applicants (Ford, 2004). This study exhibits the argument of racial discrimination that favors the Anglo-Saxon population over minorities.

Ethnic- Homophily

In a study by Nicolas Jacquemet, involving three identical résumé with Caucasian, African American, and an “unidentifiable” foreign name was posted in the Chicago, help wanted, and newspaper. The Caucasian résumés received almost one-third more call-backs than the non-Caucasian résumés. The study defined the expanded nature of discriminatory behavior that the author called, *ethnic homophily*. *Ethnic homophily* is the preference for associating with individuals of the same racial background (Wimmer, 2010). The study resulted in another finding that *homophily* also occurs among “co-ethnics of the same racial background and from balancing mechanisms such as the tendency to reciprocate friendships or to befriend the friends of friends, which both amplify the homogeneity effects of homophily” (Wimmer, 2010). As Andreas Wimmer stated, “Birds of a feather flock together” (Jacquemet, 2012). This simplified analysis demonstrates how ethnic/racial biases can begin within the psychological realm. Though CSUDH students explained that at first they were partial to qualifications, the almost ‘natural’ tendency to find connections with the candidate’s name and their ethnicity/race was still a part of the decision making process.

Chicago Ad Posting Experiment

Based on Richard D. Arvey's book, *Fairness in Selecting Employees*, "unfair discrimination or bias is said to exist when members of a minority group have lower probabilities of being selected for a job when, in fact, if they had been selected, their probabilities of performing successfully in a job would have been equal to those of non-minority group members." In addition to this statement, the above study adds that unfair discrimination does not just favor Caucasian applicants, it can also favor different minority groups where favoritism, and relatable factors affect hiring decisions (Arvey, 1988).

In a similar study by Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, the question of whether "Emily and Greg are more employable than Lakisha and Jamal", supports the above thesis that the name of applicants can denote many negative, as well as positive connotations (Purkissa, 2006). In the study, using the correspondence testing method, African American sounding names and Caucasian sounding names were randomly posted in the Chicago "help-wanted" ads. It resulted in résumés with the Caucasian sounding name receiving 50 percent more call-backs than the African American résumés. This study infers different theories behind the hiring process, and biases. It presents the argument that there are prevalent discriminatory biases by employers; it also presents the argument that such biases are of the past, and with the changing social and economical environment, employers do not make these general biases as they once did. The final argument is that in today's work environment, reverse discrimination is more prevalent (Bertrand, 2004). All arguments are valid at their core, which proposes more limitations to the research's total validity.

Research Limitations

According to the study conducted by Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullaina, "résumés with white-sounding names have a 50% greater chance of receiving a callback when compared to those with African American names." In CSUDH study above, a student of Hispanic background testified that 90% of all call-backs were for bilingual positions, but he does not divulge the fact that he is bilingual in any way on his résumé. His name is Henry Flores, and as a Psychology major, he decided to "test the

waters” after a conversation with a Human Resources student. By not presenting any information that would elude to him being bilingual, yet continually receiving bilingual based positions, Henry Flores was able to infer a subtle form of bias activity supporting the above thesis.

All findings above are arguments of any prevalent ethnic/racial biases within the hiring decision making process, in regards to name-gender association. The studies acknowledge the external factors that can affect hiring decisions, such as, undesirable experiences for the job, weak qualifications, etc. Such limitations can affect the severity of ethnic/racial biases. Sub-conscientiously or conscientiously, name-gender associations can affect anyone in any business. Though research cannot prove that these biases emphatically occur in every situation, it can have impact in any capacity.

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