

## **Do People From Different Races and Ethnicities Face Racial Discrimination in Employment in the US?**

Racial discrimination is defined as the “unequal treatment of persons or groups on the basis of their race or ethnicity” (Pager & Shepherd, 2008, p.181). In this paper, I argue that racial discrimination is prevalent in employment and that jobseekers from different races and ethnicities experience discrimination in the US labor market.

I support my position on racial discrimination in employment with the following three arguments. First, I argue racial discrimination is the cause of the employment and wage gap between African-Americans and White-Americans. Statistical analyses have revealed large racial inequalities in employment outcomes even when factors like education, age, and urban location were controlled (Lang & Lehmann, 2012). Second, I argue stereotypes represent another factor susceptible to influence employers’ decisions to hire. Misbeliefs about other cultures can lead employers to discrimination against people of a particular race because they attribute [to](#) them negative racial characteristics (Moss & Tilly, 2001). Third, I argue racial discrimination in employment has been identified through recruitment practices. Employers have used some practices like taste-based discrimination or ethnic homophily. This practice consists of favoring one’s own race when dealing with applicants (Neckerman & Kirscherman, 1991).

I also consider alternative positions of racial discrimination in the field of employment. These positions doubt the existence of racial discrimination in the US labor market because of protective laws such as the Civil Rights Act (Pager & Shepherd, 2008). Others claim the difficulty to really measure and demonstrate racial discrimination. Another opposing view concerns the exaggeration over racial discrimination and claims that other factors than race could affect people’s employment opportunities. While these positions certainly have support, I show that the laws protecting against discrimination are not always respected and employers have a certain level of freedom and flexibility in the hiring process.

This paper is important because it explores the social, economic, and political problem of racial discrimination in employment in the US. It also shows the way jobseekers experience racial discrimination and employers avoid applicants from different races. This paper is also a useful depiction of the situation in the US in terms of racial discrimination and how well the country has managed to fight it. It is an opportunity for the audience, whether it be informed and aware about the issue or not, to realize the seriousness of racial discrimination in employment. If job's opportunities are unequal because of race, the ability to choose housing and access medical care are subsequently affected. I conclude that it is the federal government responsibility to be more vigilant and involved to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination in employment and other areas.

### **Racial Discrimination Is the Cause of Wage and Employment Gap**

One way for researchers to study discrimination is by investigating disparities in outcomes between groups of people. Statistical models used mostly by labor economists have identified systematic disparities between groups. Racial discrimination occurs when companies pay equally qualified members of two races different rates for the same job (Pettigrew & Taylor, 2015). Therefore, the wage gap existing between Whites and other minorities has brought researchers to analyze whether racial discrimination is the main cause.

### **Black Minority**

It is common to see much of the racial discrimination research focused on African Americans and the persisting wage gap between Black and White men. According to Lang and Lehmann (2012), there has been a gap in earnings between the Black and White population. This gap represents slightly over 20-% for both part-time and full-time workers. Through a cross-temporal analysis of Black and White men from 1972 to 1994, Bobo et al. (1997) explained that this gap in income persists even when other factors of human capital, such as education, work experience, and skills, are adjusted and controlled in equations predicting income. In another of his study, Smith (2002) concluded that there is a concentration of racial minorities in lower levels of stability and authority jobs and with

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fewer opportunities for advancement. He further adds that Black men earn a significantly lower income in high authority positions. These findings agree with a previous study by Wilson et al. (1995) stating that discrepancies increase among Black men with higher levels of education.

There is not only a wage gap but also an employment gap between Blacks and Whites. As Lang and Lehmann (2012) report, the employment rate difference of Black and White men aged between 25 to 54 is 7.8 % in 2008. The unemployment rate is higher for Blacks with a difference of 4.6 %. -Not only does the Black minority spend more time looking for a job (Tomaskovic et al., 2005), they also experience longer unemployment than Whites even when factors like age and education are controlled (Wilson et al., 1995). This large Black-White unemployment gap is confirmed by Ritter and Taylor (2011) who also recognize that the gap can be partially explained by deficiencies in human capital as poorly educated people have higher rates of unemployment than ~~the those who are~~ well-educated ones. However, the authors also argue that these characteristics in human capital account for only 15% to 25% of the gaps for 1960 through 1990. -Newer numbers suggest that the employment ratio was 58.3 % for Blacks versus 60.7 % for Whites in 2018. Jobless rates are lower than previous years for African-Americans but still higher than for any other race. Indeed, 6.5 % of African Americans were unemployed in 2018 according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019). This employment gap has been documented in many studies showing that African-Americans have a disadvantage at the employment and unemployment levels.

Nunley et al. (2015) wanted to investigate the employment gap between Black and White young college graduates and to what extent racial discrimination can explain this gap. Their experiment focuses on young college graduates to lessen the probability for employers to base their hiring decisions on the quality of experience. Their experiment, consisting of job seekers' resumes in which the race is signaled with Black and White sounding names, revealed that applicants with a Black sounding name received 14 % less interview calls that

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their White counterparts. These employment differentials are true for jobs that require customer interaction.

### Hispanic Minority and Other Races

Perceptions of discrimination are also common in the Hispanic minority. Indeed, Schiller (2004) argues that about 20-% of Hispanics reported they had personally been ignored for a job or promotion because of their race or ethnicity. Furthermore, in a study by Kenney and Wissoker (1994), Hispanic job seekers were found to be treated differently than the Anglo ones in terms of receiving a positive response when requesting to file an application, obtaining an interview and getting a job. Their unemployment rate was 4.7 % in 2018 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The Hispanics' unemployment rate is lower than the Black minority unemployment rate but still higher than that of the Whites.

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For the most part, occupational data can represent an indicator of racial and ethnic labor market differences. It is more common to see Whites and Asians in higher positions. For example, 41-% of employed Whites and 54 % of employed Asians held managerial, professional, and related occupations compared with 31 % of Blacks and 22 % of Hispanics (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to hold jobs in production, transportation, and material moving compared to Whites. It is important to note that racial discrimination against Asians is not well documented, probably because this minority group is less discriminated against in the labor market.

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### Racial Stereotypes and Prejudice

Identifying the causes of racial discrimination is difficult as so many factors are involved at different levels. As far as stereotypes are concerned, they operate at the individual level since they are personal opinions and beliefs of a person about races. Stereotypes are essential for researchers since they hold their own dynamic forces that may initiate discriminatory behaviors (Pager and Shepherd, 2008). The fact that people who have stereotypes are internally motivated makes it difficult to measure the extent to which they lead to discrimination in employment. However, they have a central place in the

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understanding of racial discrimination in the labor market (Quillian, 2006). Stereotypes are misbeliefs about other cultures that can lead employers to discriminate against people of a particular race because they attribute them with negative racial characteristics (Moss and Tilly, 2001). It seems, according to Pager (2007) and Pettigrew and Taylor (2005), that racial stereotypes are still common and appear to have changed a little over the years despite the shift of racial beliefs toward more egalitarian ones.

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One method that researchers have used to identify racial discrimination in employment has been through in-person interviews. For example, Kirschenman and Neckerman (1991) describe how employers admitted their avoidance of young, inner-city Black men when they search for low-wage workers. The interviewed employers were reported to be rather frank in the characteristics they gave to this group. “Lazy” and “unreliable” were among the words they used to describe the inner-city Black jobseekers (p. 213). Wilson et al. (1995) also report the disadvantage that African-Americans have during interviews because of their body language and communication skills. Many Chicago employers view inner-city Black males as uneducated, unreliable, irresponsible, and dishonest. Moss and Tilly (2001) report similar perceptions of Black workers. Using a telephone survey of 8,000 managers in Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles between 1992 and 1995, the authors found that 15 to 33 % of the employers said that Blacks lack essential skills and motivation. Quillian (2006) pointed out that this method of in-person interviews and in-depth studies of employers has serious limitations because the employers engaging in discriminatory actions are not fully accurate in their responses. They might fear legal action if they admit racial discriminatory behaviors. However, she further adds that these reports of employers who commit racial discrimination still help provide invaluable psychological insight into the causes of discrimination.

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Much of the work in this area has been conducted on the notion of prejudice which is defined by Lang and Lehmann (2012) as “a dislike” for other races and ethnicities based on a “preconceived” belief that is not founded on “reason or actual experience” (p.223).

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As Taylor & Pettigrew (2000) remark, there is a dual nature to this definition. Not only is there ~~is~~ a negative feeling or dislike toward a specific group, but there is also a poorly established opinion or a stereotype about members of the specific group. As a result, prejudice is an attitude in people's head that can be reflected in their behavior and ultimately motivate or lead to unequal treatments among racial groups.

These concepts of stereotypes and prejudicial behavior are psychological in nature.

That is why they have brought researchers to distinguish between direct and indirect discrimination. Researchers also refer to this distinction as conscious and unconscious discrimination. Pettigrew and Taylor (2015) argue that people "who are conscious of their abetting racial discrimination are typically racially prejudiced" (p. 542). Their intentions of harming are explicit and regarded as justified. That said, many people who take part in racial discrimination are unaware of their behavior and just following the "group norms participating in the subtle forms of indirect discrimination" (p. 542). The authors mention that social psychologists view this attitude as a preference of the in-group without intention of harming the out-group. The relationship between racial prejudice and racial discrimination might not be firm in this case, but racial discrimination still exists indirectly. As an example, many employers rely on word-of-mouth to hire new employees, especially for jobs that do not require skills. Therefore, current workers, often mostly Whites, create implicitly a disproportionate workforce by bringing in White friends and relatives to fill these jobs, contributing in turn to racial inequalities in employment.

### Recruiting Practices

Methods of job recruitment have a significant impact on minority job seekers. A great deal of research has tried to identify whether employers base their hiring decisions on race or not. The results of many experimental audit studies have consistently concluded the existence of racial discrimination in recruiting as well as a White preference (Pager, 2007). Recruitment by names, word-of-mouth, taste-based, and religious affiliation are some of the practices used by employers that lead to discriminatory behaviors.

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### Recruitment by Names

Employers can discriminate against certain job seekers and decide to hire or not by examining their names. For example, in a study by Bertrand & Mullainathan (2004), identical resumes were mailed to employers in Boston and Chicago for help-wanted ads using racially identifiable names on purpose. Names like Lakisha and Jamal were used to signal African American names while names like Brad and Emily signaled White names. This experiment showed significant racial differences in callback rates. Applicants with African American names got far ~~less~~ fewer callbacks for each resume they sent out to the firms. Applicants with White names need to send ten resumes to get a callback while applicants with African American names need to send 15 resumes. This situation shows a 50 % gap in callback. In addition, a White name brings in the equivalent of an additional eight years of experience on a resume in callbacks. More importantly, in this experiment, race seems to affect the advantage of having a better resume. On the one hand, results indicated that White names with better resumes got 30 % more callbacks than White names' with lower-quality resumes. On the other hand, high quality resumes with African American names had a small effect on callbacks. Therefore, the quality of the resume does not increase the chances for African-Americans to be called for an interview.

In this study, the gap in callbacks between Blacks and Whites is attributed to the name manipulation since the resumes sent to employers were identical in qualifications. It is worth mentioning that the authors speculate that these results might be attributed to the non-examination of resumes with Black names by employers as they stopped from doing so after reading the name. Baert et al. (2013) bring further evidence to the bias against racially sounding names but this time in relation to labor market tightness. The authors explained that employers are willing to hire a minority applicant if they have difficulties filling vacancies. The results of their correspondence study show that applicants with a foreign name are equally called back for an interview compared to applicants with White names if the

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vacancies are difficult to fill. However, if the job vacancies can be easily filled up, the applicants with a foreign name have to send twice as many applications.

**Word-Of-Mouth Recruiting**

Less explicit recruitment practices such as word-of-mouth are somehow accepted in the workplace and they can contribute to unequal access to employment and advancement opportunities for minority job applicants (Quillian et al., 2017). Indeed, as mentioned above, as an implicit form of racial prejudice, word-of mouth recruiting is the practice where employers fill job openings by asking for recommendations from other workers, other employers, or their own social networks. This practice tends to limit workers’ racial, ethnic, and even gender diversification in the workplace.

**Taste-Based Discrimination or Ethnic Homophily**

( I will develop this section later)

**Phenotype and Religious Affiliation**

In an interesting study, Yemane (2020) gives attention attends to ethnic heterogeneity within racial groups. She also questions whether there is more to be considered than just race when investigating discrimination in the labor market. Furthermore, she adds religious affiliation as a factor capable of influencing hiring decisions. By using a correspondence method in which pretended jobseekers send job applications across 49 states in the US, the author aims to record employer’s callbacks. The job applicants belong to 35 different ethnicities and have different religious backgrounds. Language and geographic migration were mentioned in their cover letters, except for Whites and African Americans. The study shows a discrimination by ethnicity within the racial group. In other words, employers not only tend to discriminate because they perceive the applicants as Black, Hispanic or Asian but also discriminate against different ethnic groups. This study also reveals how being Muslim and phenotypically non-White constitute “strong markers of otherness” (p. 9) that lead to bias. In addition, while Muslim affiliation or non-Whiteness is enough for some

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employers to engage in discriminatory behavior, discrimination against Muslims is greater than that of non-Whites. Different ethnic and religious background are additional factors leading to racial discrimination.

**The Civil Rights Act Protecting People from Different Races and Ethnicities**

Many specialists have argued that discrimination in the United States has decreased over time. The American society has changed in fundamental ways since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Many social and legal reforms took shape eliminating the segregation era against African Americans (Heckman, 1998). Overt and common forms of discrimination were not allowed anymore. The American society has been working towards reaching a color-blind society where racial minorities have henceforth acquired equal rights and opportunities as the White majority. For some, racial discrimination is no longer the cause of unequal life chances for African Americans and Hispanics. Indeed, according to Pager (2007), most White Americans believe that a Black person has equal chances at getting a job as an equally qualified White person. In addition, only about 30 % believe that racial discrimination explains the disparities in jobs and housing between Whites and minorities. Diversity has been endorsed by large companies that have modified their hiring practices accordingly. The election of a Black president was also a sign that the American society matured and left its dark slavery and segregation history behind it.

While some undeniable racial progress was achieved, these claims of a declining racial discrimination can be challenged despite. Some studies give evidence to the persistence of racial discrimination in key economic and social sectors. As an example, a recent meta-analysis by Quillian et al. (2017), provide strong evidence that racial discrimination in the American society has hardly changed over the past 25 years, which seems to indicate that the ideal society free of discrimination is still not-to be achieved. In fact, while explicit forms of prejudice have sharply decreased, discrimination has become subtle and implicit. The meta-analysis study shows that rates of hiring discrimination have not changed over time for

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African Americans and that they remain clearly at a disadvantage at the point of hire compared with equally qualified Whites. The authors confidently conclude that these results, coming from 21 field experiment and audit studies, were statistically interpreted. As far as Latinos are concerned, conclusions about a possible regression in hiring discrimination of Latinos were difficult to draw because of a small number of studies.

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Since the adoption of reforms in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, most large organizations have tried to integrate programs to comply with antidiscrimination laws and promote diversity. As Kalev et al. (2006) have argued, some initiatives to reduce bias such as the diversity training have had little impact. Some of these programs would-may be more successful if they are in line with concrete goals and under the supervision and accountability of the organization’s leadership.

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Another relevant example of the persistence of racial discrimination even after major effort to contain it lies on the role of networks. Many researchers concluded that the effect of hiring workers through networks is detrimental to minorities or to groups that are not well represented in some organizations (Fernandez et al. 2000). Like McPherson et al. (2001) show it in their study, networks are more likely to keep the current racial composition of the organization because of referrals, a practice that is convenient for employers. For example, in a study of non-college jobs, Mouw (2002) observes that the use of employee referrals in firms where the racial composition is mainly White reduces the probability to hire a Black worker by nearly 75% compared to the use of newspaper ads. This referral situation is another factor that causes unemployment gap between Blacks and Whites.

### **Racial Discrimination Is Difficult to Measure**

The belief of some people that racial discrimination is a thing of the past extends to the lack of knowledge of the numerous methods used to investigate racial discrimination in employment. It is evident that any method has its limitations but together they contribute to a

better understanding of modern racial discrimination and most importantly bring insights to whether, how, and to what extent there is discrimination in the labor market.

### Studies ~~Of~~ Law and Legal Reports

Formal discrimination claims from the courts, Fair Employment/~~Fair Housing~~ Bureaus, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) represent official records of discrimination that offer essential insights into the ways discrimination is performed and the kinds of legal actions taken accordingly in different contexts overtime (Pager & Shepherd, 2007). Of course, not all complaints are purely honest, but according to some specialists, the fake ones are insignificant compared with the cases of discrimination that are unreported or unnoticed (Tomaskovic-Devey et al., 2005). The analysis by Roscigno (2007) of thousands of employment and housing discrimination claims filed in the state of Ohio describe discriminatory behaviors and other more discrete or subtle forms of racial bias. All in all, these claims and reports constitute essential guides for action.

### Statistical Analyses

A more accurate way to measure racial discrimination is through statistical analyses. They serve to measure the inequalities in incomes between groups. (Not complete)

### Experimental Approaches

It is difficult to measure whether race is the motivation behind discrimination in employment. ~~That is why a successful way to do it has been through experimental research.~~ While ~~some has been~~ conducted in the lab, most of the experimental research has been conducted in the field. This ~~method-approach~~ provides even better results than statistical models as they provide strong evidence of causal relationship (Quillian et al., 2017). Field experiments, also called audits, provide a concrete measure of discrimination in authentic settings. In this type of studies, ~~individuals called~~ testers are selected, trained, and sent to firms to play the role of a job seeker. The particularity of these audits resides in sending equally

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qualified people who differ only by race. ~~That~~ This way, it is possible for researchers to examine the extent to which race is a problem in employment opportunities. Field experiments have their share of criticism as they are costly, difficult to implement, and limited to hiring decisions and not training, promotion or job termination. Nevertheless, the results of the studies derived from this type of method have given a great deal of evidence and valuable insights to racial discrimination and employers' hiring practices (Pager, 2007). This method "is a design with high causal (internal) validity" (Quillian et al., 2017, p. 1) because the experimenter can manipulate the process and have control over many possible confusing variables. Specifically, field experimental research provides helpful insights on the issue of racial discrimination.

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### **Factors Other Than Race Explain Employment Disparities**

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### **Conclusion**

The labor market is a place where disparities among racial groups have always existed. The United States, a country that was historically ~~segregating-segregated against people from different races, particularly African Americans, have-has~~ tried to forget this era and work to achieve a color-blind society that treats all people equally. This initiative has brought to life the Civil Rights in the 1960's with many important reforms to neutralize racial discrimination in many aspects of racial minorities' ~~lives~~. Although, considerable progress has been made since that time, the issue of racial discrimination still exists and continues to be a factor in explaining inequalities in economic and social outcomes. Racial discrimination has been the subject of interest of many researchers whether they be economists, sociologists, or psychologists. The numerous studies of racial discrimination have brought evidence to the fact that racial discrimination is not over but has instead taken new forms that affect the equal chances to apply for a job, get an interview, or a promotion. Research has found that even qualified minorities do not get equal job and career

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advancement opportunities. The characteristic of the modern racial discrimination lies in its subtle and implicit nature creating an indirect discrimination.

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Although there were plenty of places where I could take off some points – you more than made up for it elsewhere

Quite a lot to do for the next draft

BUT

I think you are very much on your way!

Well played! ☺

Great read!

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