

Alyssa Soberano

Brian Meksavanh

Mia Martinez-Escobar

Christina Lozada

Introduction:

Over the years, there is a public perception that ethnic discrimination is quickly leaving society, but many minorities still face day-to-day discrimination in the labor market. While brainstorming, we landed on the topic of names. So we decided to research into the effect of ethnic names and discrimination in the job market. There is plenty of literature on ethnic discrimination, but not so much on it relates to people's names, which will be the focus for our study.

When parents are expecting a child, one of their toughest decisions is what to name them. It appears that families choose to name their children specific names for many reasons. However, the dilemma parents are often faced with is whether they should name their child a distinctive name that celebrates their culture or give their child a name that would that would help them blend in. Studies have found that regardless of what you decide to name your child can lead to discrimination in the labor market. A small study done by LinkedIn, one of the world's largest professional networks that help people connect, found that the top CEO names are Peter, Bob, Jack, Cynthia, and Sally. This small study demonstrates that names in higher level corporate jobs, are not quite diverse, as these names are predominantly Anglo-Saxon names.

Although there is evidence that supports claims of hiring discrimination, we want to further delve into the subject. Specifically, if people with distinctive names who send their resumes to employers are less likely to get a call back. Additionally, we plan to focus on the Los

Angeles area, as California is often cited as a liberal and generally non-discriminatory state in comparison to other states and other countries.

Road-Map:

“Every measure of economic success reveals significant racial inequality in the US labor market. Compared to Whites, African Americans are twice as likely to be unemployed and earn nearly 25 percent less when they are employed (Council of Economic Advisers, 1998).” This discrepancy has led to many discussions on whether employers discriminate by race. When employers encounter different ethnic groups that are not white candidates, do they favor the white ones, regardless of education or previous work experience backgrounds? Many might argue yes, however, others argue that discrimination was a period of time that has been left in the past. Additionally, some argue that through increased employer engagement, programs and organizations; they offer resources that address equality, so when employers are faced with similar interviewees but with different names that indicate their nationality, they will solely choose an applicant based off who has the experience that the employer needs. This is why this topic is becoming a growing research topic. Additionally, previous research has documented that names negatively affect the application process when applying for jobs. However, data limitations make it difficult to test these views. For this reason, we conducted a study to make an attempt to address these issues. We asked our peers at Cal Poly University, to review two resumes to see what resumes students were to choose if they were a hiring manager looking for a specific candidate to fill their position.

Relevant Literature:

The first review we found, “Evidence on Discrimination in Employment: Codes of Color, Codes of Gender” by Darity and Mason (1998), is focused on discrimination in workforce. It mentions that without all of the information about candidates, employers can make assumptions about them, leading to unintentional discrimination. They give different methodologies in how to audit and approach research for your study and how tests, like the “correspondence test” which involves sending letters of inquiry from prospective “applicants” to employers can help demonstrate the disparity between Latin/African American names versus Anglo-Saxon names. This is helpful because in the review it indicates how their findings were all based in other countries and not so much in the United States, so this test and a few others can be a good tool in how we approach our research and get relevant results back.

McGinnity and Lunn’s (2011) study “Measuring Discrimination Facing Ethnic Minority Job Applicants: An Irish Experiment” focuses hiring discrimination in Ireland, which is stated as a ‘new immigration country’, where minority candidates with African, Asian, or German names are being discriminated against. The study takes 500 CVs with different minority-based and Irish names to measure discrimination in the amount of responses each CV receives. It is found that Irish names are over twice more likely to be invited to interview than the CVs with ethnic names. However, there was no large discrepancy between the discrimination of Asian, African, and German names, meaning that the largest discrimination is simply against non-Irish applicants. There is a ‘minority penalty’ against candidates, but it is not clear if it is because of the Irish national identity, or a discrimination against growing minorities. Utilizing a methodology similar to this study could prove itself useful for our pilot study.

By attempting to close the gap on current literature by conducting a study that shows the discrimination of Arab Americans, Widner and Chicoine (2011) address post 9/11 anti-Arab

sentiments in the United States. By sending out 265 similar resumes with names that are white-sounding and names that are Arab-sounding, the study concluded that Arab applicants needed to send two resumes as opposed to the single resume a white applicant sends in. The interpretation of results can help the research team to understand the results of this pilot study well, as well as give insight into what methodology will work.

Erwin (1999), in “Attractiveness of First Names and Academic Achievement”, attempts to examine the association between the stereotypes of attractive first name in the academic setting. This essentially means people tend to favor the name that isn’t hard to pronounce or go off the way it sounds and would correlate it to achieving better grades. The actual experiment assessed grades for work done by individuals with unattractive names versus ones with names that were deemed average or attractive. The study found that the unattractive names performed significantly better than the other party. The results were interpreted as unattractive names were stereotyped towards academic achievement but the evidence shows everything is internalized. Name stereotypes are internalized and that those are shown through that one person's behavior. The results of the study showed that grades were higher for individuals with the unattractive names versus those with attractive names. Again the difference in the grades associated with different name evaluations aren’t solely based on the biased views of the people who grade them or the quality of work. The academic ability stereotypes are found to be internalized, which is tangentially related to this study as it is attempting to covertly check for implicit bias.

“At the doorstep to employment: Discrimination against immigrants as a function of applicant ethnicity, job type, and raters' prejudice” by Krings and Olivares (2007) addresses the subject of the effect of minority discrimination in the hiring process for immigrants and their subsequent generations. First-generation immigrants are researched, but more specifically

second-generation applicants because they largely face the same discrimination, but they have the same learning environment and skills as the indigenous population. The second goal was to examine the role of moderating discrimination and evaluations and the third goal was to examine prejudice against immigrants, evaluations, and discrimination against applicants. The results showed there being discrimination in interpersonal positions, and other specific job roles that needed more interviews or subjective criteria to determine if they received a job. Overt prejudice was very low, meaning that there is little open discrimination, so it would be more subtle or even unconscious. While being a more broad subject, this study gives more insight into how to interpret results as well as how to conduct the study.

Research Question:

Does having an ethnically diverse name affect the chance of an opportunity for employment in the Southern California job market?

Hypothesis:

We predict that candidates with more ethnic names for a job will receive less positive results than

a candidate with an Anglo-Saxon name

Methods:

Participants/Content

The research study had a total of 50 participants ranging from many different ethnic backgrounds with Asian/Pacific Islander dominating at 46%. Hispanic/Latino followed shortly at 34%. The remaining ethnicities are Black at 8%, Caucasian at 12% and Other at 4%. This comes to a grand total of 104%, so the remaining 4% of Other is a participant who is of a mixed race. About 58% of the sample were male and 42% are female. The survey asked the participants what county they are currently employed in, which the data showed was mostly Los Angeles county. Only 7.1% said they work in Orange County and another 7.1% said they work in San Bernardino County. Participants were then asked what type of job environment they work in, which answers ranged from a desk job, retail, and the restaurant industry. 62.2% of the sample said they work in the food industry, while 18.9% said they work at a desk job and another 18.9% said they work in retail.

Research Procedure:

We decided to take on the quantitative method because we felt this would best represent the data. In order to do so, we decided to create two fictional resumes to hand out to our sample of 50 participants. We were not able to get in touch with hiring managers, so we opted to reach out to college students in three separate counties via Google Questionnaire. Once we found participants to answer the questionnaire, Google automatically compiled the data into graphs in which we were able to analyze all of the questions.

Construction of Resumes

We aimed to make both resumes similar but one having better experience. Both have the same amount of years but the applicant, Najwa Sabbagh (Resume B), has had more professional

experience in hopes that participants would see past the name and assumption of what race the applicant may be. We decided to keep the same skill set for both resumes to keep it uniform. This was done intentionally so both applicants have an equal opportunity to receive a call back from hiring managers. Objectives for both resumes also stayed the same in order for the participants to take both applicants into consideration. Finally, the education for both resumes were slightly altered. We made sure the amount of schooling was similar, but Resume B would have one more year of school before graduating. This was done intentionally because we wanted Resume A to have one more advantage other than her name for more equal balance between the two resumes.

Variables:

Independent Variable

Our independent variable are the applicants' names, Linda Thompson and Najwa Sabbagh.

Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable is the chance of the applicant receiving a call back for employment.

Although we were not able to reach out to hiring managers, we opted for college students and directed them to act as if they are hiring managers who can make the call on whether or not who receives a call back for employment.

Resume names

While providing the resumes, we used two names to base the study off of. Resume A had the name “Linda Thompson” where as resume B had the name “Najwa Sabbagh.” We intended to choose the name Linda Thompson because we believe it would make the participants think she is an older Caucasian lady. However, the name is pretty versatile which could make participants believe she could be of African American decent as well. The name Najwa Sabbagh was chosen off of an online website which listed popular Arab names. We intentionally chose a difficult name for most to pronounce and was uncommon compare to an every day name, such as Linda.

Skills

Each resume had a similar skill set. Both resumes had skills such as attention to detail, team leadership, and project planning, to name a few. Having similar attributes helped to make sure that there were no other influences in deciding which resume to choose. It put the focus more on the name and the decision to hire based on the first name which was the purpose of the survey.

Education

Both resumes are similar in education. Resume A and Resume B both have the same number of degrees, attended the same university, and are studying the same subject. The only major difference is the year of graduation. We made the survey so that Resume A, Linda Thompson, will graduate in 2019 as opposed to Najwa Sabbagh who aims to graduate in 2020.

Experience

For Resume A, we included three separated job positions and made it range from a part-time position to something more stable. For example, Linda Thompson worked at Chuck E. Cheese, Bank of America, and finally, a law firm. As for Najwa Sabbagh, her resume had a similar structure, however, her job experience ranged from retail at Forever 21, a receptionist, and ending at a law firm as well.

Resume aesthetic

Both Resume A and B have the same style of resume. This was done intentionally because we did not want to create a bias when the resume was given to the participants. We wanted the participants to focus on solely the name of the applicant and their skills and qualifications. By asking the question, “At first glance, I would hire...” we hoped that the participant would focus on the name of the applicant

Results/Findings:

Figure 1. Likeliness of *Resume A* Receiving a Call Back

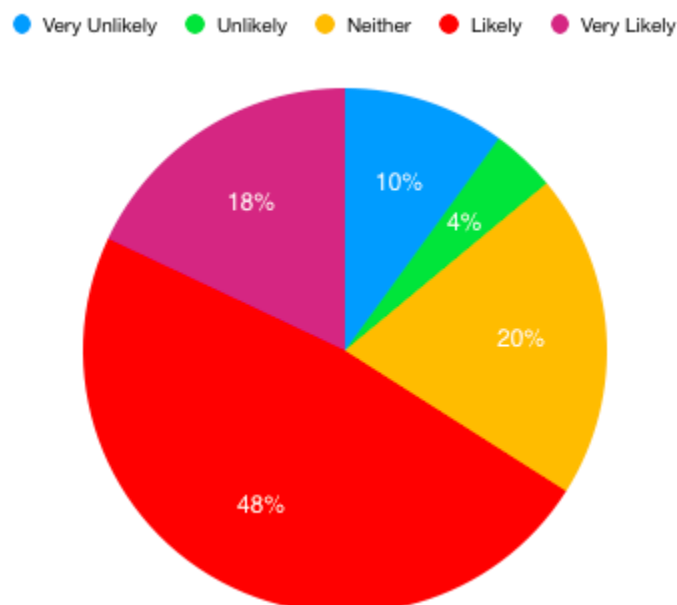


Figure 1 shows the percentage of likeliness the participant will hire *Resume A*. Out of a sample of 50 participants, 48% said they are likely to call *Resume A* back for an interview, although her work experience is not as professional as *Resume B*'s experience.

Figure 2. Likeliness of *Resume B* Receiving a Call Back

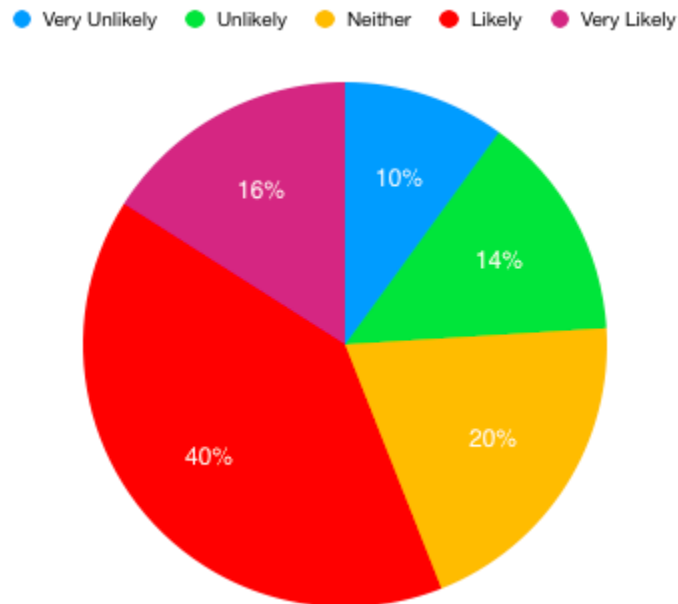


Figure 2 shows the percentage of likeliness the participant will hire *Resume B*. Out of a sample of 50 participants, 40% said they are likely to call *Resume A* back for an interview. Compared to the likeliness of a call back for *Resume A*, *Resume B* had 8% less of a chance. Another significant difference is the percentage of unlikeliness the participants answered for *Resume B*. While *Resume A* is only 4% unlikely to get a call back, *Resume B* topped it at 14%. As for “very unlikely” and a neutral response, the data stayed consistent for both resumes.

Figure 3. Hiring an Applicant Based on Skills and Qualifications

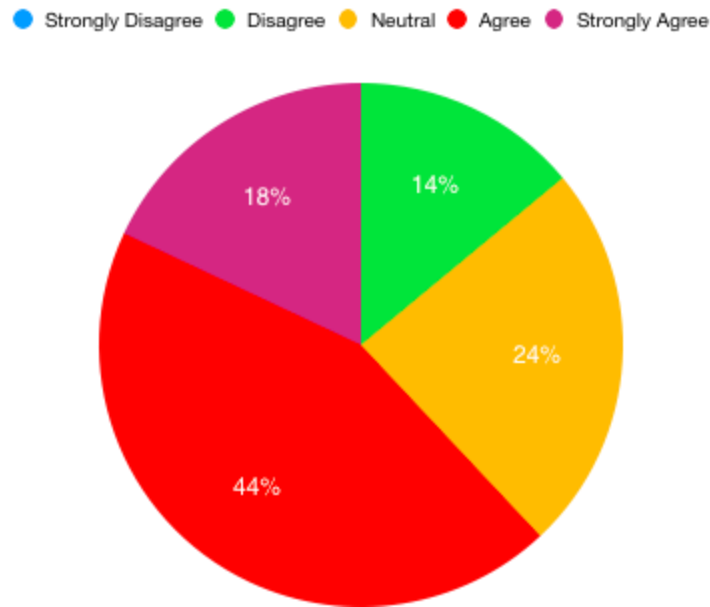


Figure 3 shows the results of the participants hiring an applicant based on solely his or her skills and qualifications. Out of a sample of 50 participants, 44% agreed that skills and qualifications are how a hiring manager chooses to hire. No participants strongly disagreed with hiring an applicant based on their skills and qualifications. However, only 18% of participants strongly agree they would hire an applicant based on their skills and qualifications. This could mean that the rest of the participants take other factors into consideration when deciding who receives a call back for employment whether it is the applicant's education or the name in our study.

Figure 4. Percentage of Guaranteed Hire

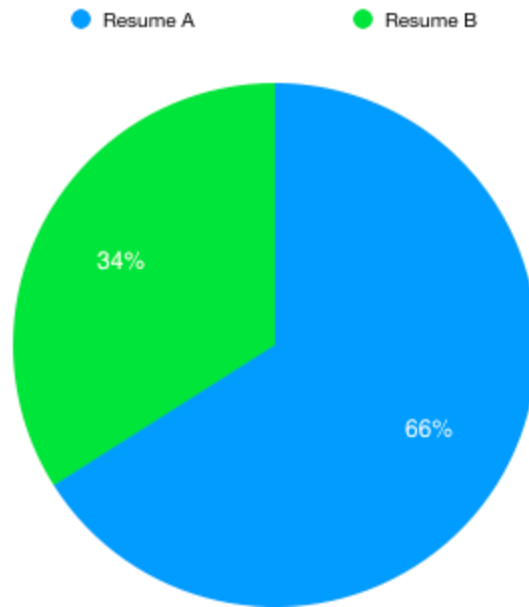


Figure 4 shows the percentage of both resumes when participants were asked which one they would hire at first glance. We enlarged the applicant's name and made a basic resume format so that the first thing that will catch the participant's eye is their name. There are many factors that could have played into this data, but we intended for the difference and diversity in the name to play a big part in the participant's decision in choosing who they would hire on the spot. Out of a sample of 50, 66% said they would hire *Resume A* versus 34% saying they would hire *Resume B*.

Discussion & Conclusion:

Although it may seem that our society is progressive in terms of racial inequality, there are many cases around that world that say otherwise. Racial indifference can range from a variety of cases. For this particular study we focused on the hiring process when dealing with ethnically diverse names. Based on the 50 survey responses we acquired, 48% of the participants decided they would likely hire resume A, which had the name Linda Thompson, over 40% for resume B with the name Najwa Sabbagh. Also when it came to guaranteeing the applicant a call back, 56% of the survey participants decided they would call resume A back over resume B.

The results on initial evaluation show that Resume B, the resume with a more ethnic name, would be hired over Resume A, the resume with the Anglo-Saxon name. Based on past research and assumptions, our hypothesis claimed the study would prove that ethnic names would provide less employment opportunities for potential candidates. The results from our survey showed that a majority would hire applicants based on work experience, responsibilities at past jobs, and skills with 78%, 72%, and 76% respectively. It is safe to say that although those three major criteria for hiring someone stood out the most, it seems people would rather give the opportunity to someone with names that were more common. Our results provide no substantial evidence for a hiring bias based on perceived race, but it provides a further insight into some attitudes of the chosen sample. The team was under the impression that there would be more bias against the ethnic name because of the racial tension present in society. While this might have a larger impact on a more representative sample of the United States in its entirety, California has a reputation of being a more liberal state, especially in the more populated regions such as the Bay Area and Los Angeles. As well as a regional attitude that could have made an impact on the results, there is a demographic limitation based on the age of the sample. The chosen sample was college-aged students. While initially discussing the pilot study, the team thought it would be appropriate to use a sample of hiring managers that had the most experience with the scenarios that were being addressed in the study. The sample as it was collected was not people in managerial positions, but it provides an insight into what the workforce will look like in the coming years, as the college students have begun entering the workforce, or will enter the workforce in the near future.

Another limitation encountered was the amount of responses returned that had omitted questions. While collecting data, one of the researchers found that many of his participants were

returning the questionnaire with employment questions left blank. It's unclear if unemployed responses could have changed the results, but it could provide enough intrigue to conduct another study which addresses this. Along with omission of questions, the questionnaire was designed to probe for information about the perceived racial identity of the candidates and to determine if they had a lower employment chance. The results didn't show any overt bias, but by the nature of questionnaires, they cannot measure the continued attitudes or trends over a larger period of time. The questionnaire also serves a purpose into the study of discrimination in the professional context, but utilizing different contexts for this discussion can show attitudes that are present in situations such as romantic relationships, friendships, or education.

As a quantitative research method, this study was attempting to establish a cause and effect relationship between the lower employment and ethnic names, as many of the literature addressed, but this study could not conclude any causal relationship. With the inclusion of these limitations and other factors, this pilot study could benefit from being conducted as a field experiment, which can provide a more representative and generalizable sample of the United States, as well as providing opportunities for experimentation using different contexts that race could influence.

References

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