

Addressing Inequality

Affirmative Action

Meanings of "Affirmative Action"

- **Aggressive Equality:** seek underrepresented groups as applicants, document that you are not discriminating against them, statistical patterns part of the documentation
- **Preference at the Margin:** among equally-qualified applicants, prefer the underrepresented
- **Different Standards:** Quotas, set-asides, different qualifications

Affirmative Action in the 1960s

- Was promoted to address the problems of overt discrimination
- Long-term defense of employment discrimination by overt racists & by employers who did not want any interference in their practices
- "Can't legislate equality" the motto of resistance
- Where did the opponents of equality go after 1966?

Employment Discrimination by Name

Source

Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination

Marianne Bertrand & Sendhil Mullainathan
Working Paper 9873

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w9873>

NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC
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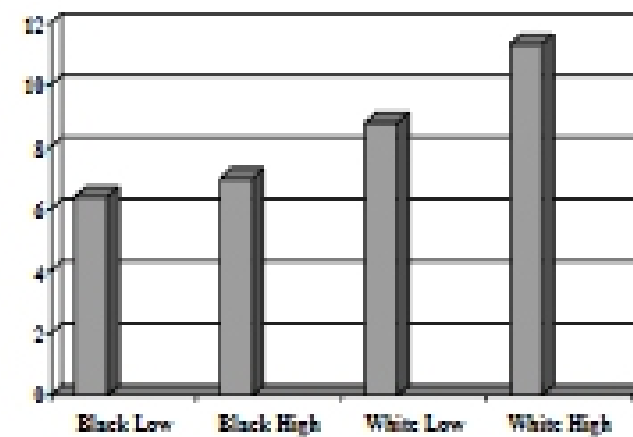
Method (1)

- Controlled experiment
- Chicago and Boston July 2001 – January 2002
- Generated a bank of realistic but fictitious resumes of college graduates
- Resumes were of high and low quality, as assessed by experience, career profile, employment gaps, skills listed
- Names randomly assigned to resumes were either "White" (e.g. Emily, Kristen, Carrie) or "Black" (e.g. Latoya, Ebony, Tamika). Many names used.

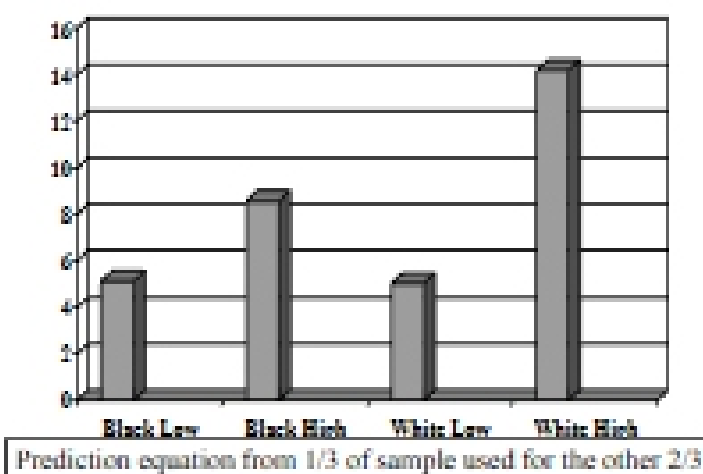
Method (2)

- Responded to 1300 newspaper ads for jobs in four occupational categories: sales, administrative support, clerical services and customer services.
- For each advertised job, sent four resumes by fax or mail: White high quality, White low quality, Black high quality, Black low quality. Nearly 5000 resumes sent.
- Dependent variable is whether the employer called or emailed and left a message

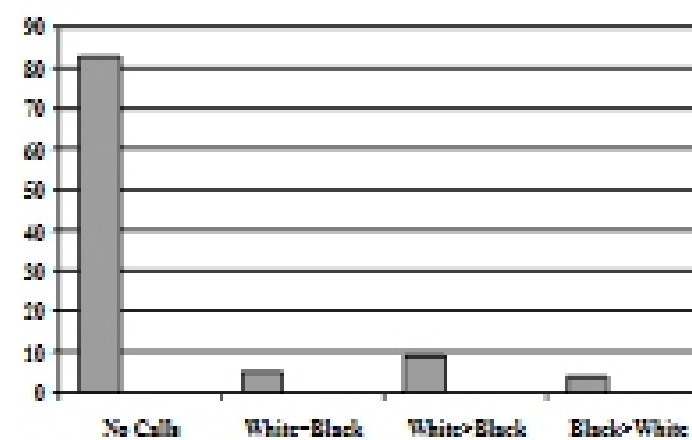
Result 1: % of applicants called by race and subjective "quality" measure



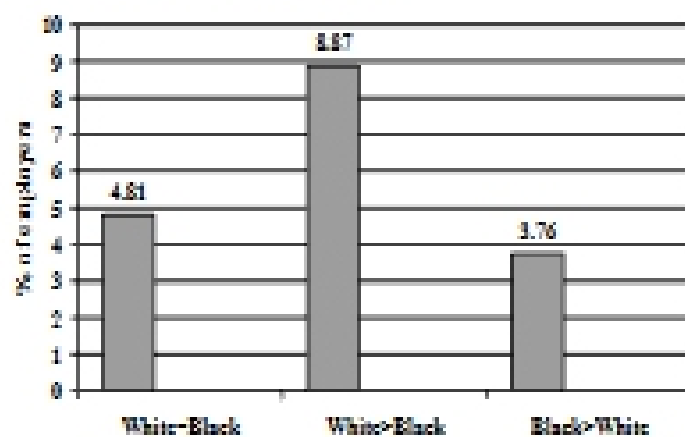
Result 2: % of applicants called by race and expected response predicted by other variables



Result 3: Racial mix of calls to applicants by 1300 employers



Result 3: Racial mix of calls to applicants by 232 employers who called at least one



Devah Pager: The Price of a Criminal Record

Controlled experiment, entry-level job seekers responding to newspaper ads in Milwaukee job market

Figure 1. The Effect of a Criminal Record on Employment Opportunities for Whites

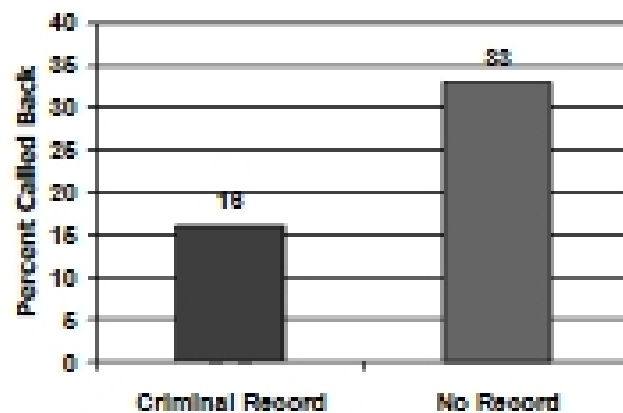
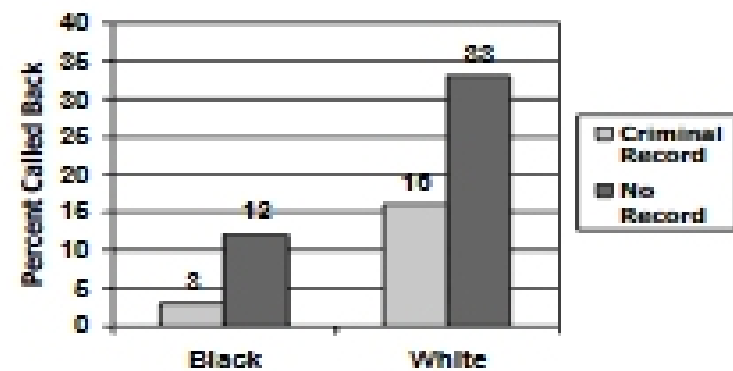


Figure 2. The Effect of a Criminal Record for Black and White Job Applicants



Myths about Affirmative Action

- It caused racial hostility
- It caused perceptions of Black inferiority
- It turned a situation of racial equality into a situation of “reverse discrimination”
- Employers would practice racial equality if left to their own devices

Unfortunately, discrimination in favor of Whites is still common.

How Does Discrimination Happen?

- Conscious, overt prejudice
- Statistical discrimination
- Reflection of customers, wider society
- Unconscious discrimination
 - Sliding standards
 - Comfort with people like yourself
- Irrelevant hiring criteria that discriminate
- Customs & practices that make people feel unwelcome, discourage applications

Employment

- Aggressive equality is the most common
- Some use of preference at the margin (especially where workforce diversity is important)
- Different standards are rare
 - Quotas are illegal
 - Quota-like practices have been imposed by courts when companies were found guilty of discrimination.
 - Some companies voluntarily have quota-like practices.

Aggressive Equality

- Employers are required to use objective hiring criteria and to keep data to demonstrate
 - Serious effort to advertise positions broadly
 - Objective qualifications of those hired & not
- Assumption that equality in hiring will, in the long run, lead to a work force that mirrors the pool of qualified applicants
 - Statistical monitoring
 - Goals and timetables
 - Debates about nature of the pool of qualified applicants