

RIETI BBL Seminar Handout

“Using Audit Experiments to Study
Political and Market Discrimination”

July 17, 2019

Speaker: James N. DRUCKMAN

<https://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/index.html>

Public Policy Experiments

James N. Druckman
Northwestern University



Experimenting Society

- “Modern nations should be ready for an experimental approach to social reform, an approach in which we try out new programs designed to cure specific social problems, in which we learn whether or not these programs are effective, and in which we retain, imitate, modify, or discard them on the basis of apparent effectiveness on the multiple imperfect criteria available.”

–Donald T. Campbell (1969: 409)

Experimenting Society

- Why experiments?
 - Randomly assign participants to a control or a treatment group.
 - On average, the control and treatment groups are the same (e.g., same number of men/women, same average income, same proportion of different religions).
 - Expose only the treatment to an intervention such as new policy or a message.
 - If the treatment and control differ on average → *clear causal evidence that the policy or message has an effect*. If they do not, it does not have an effect.

Experimenting Society Methods

- **Randomized Control Experiments** → actual random assignment. Expose only the treatment to an intervention such as new policy or a message.
 - sometimes “not politically feasible or morally justifiable in a given setting” (Campbell 1969).

Experimenting Society Methods

- “Quasi-experimental methods” →
 - Interrupted time series (e.g., Governor of CT orders crackdown on speeding in 1955, leads to fewer fatalities after versus before).
 - Regression Discontinuity (e.g., near winners of a merit program compared with actual winners → winning leads to more scholarships later but no impact on career plans).
 - Matching → for every treated unit, find an non-treated unit with similar observable characteristics against whom the effect of the treatment can be assessed.
 - E.g., take a sample of potential voters, find a partner for everyone – i.e., near twins, *except* the treated received a mobilizing message and the control did not. Did the treated vote?
- These quasi-experimental approaches can be useful but also are limited and are statistically demanding. They also tend to not produce inferences as accurate as experiments (e.g., Arceneaux et al. 2006).

Experimenting Society Methods

- Variation in source of control → truly random or quasi-experimental (near random).
- Variation in outcome studied → effect of a government policy or government officials' reactions.

Experimenting Society Methods

| | Public Policy Effect | Government Officials Behavior |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Random | Use lottery in allocation of government resources /requirements (e.g., Vietnam Lottery, Housing Lottery). | Researcher sends different requests to officials to see if equal access (e.g., audit studies). |
| Quasi-Experimental | Government randomly (or nearly so) rolls out a policy to different locations (e.g., food stamps). | Natural event occurs in one area. Compare with similar area without event (e.g., government spending after a hurricane). |

*Natural Public Policy Effect Experiments have control insofar as there is the decision of a lottery.

Experimenting Society Methods

| | Public Policy Effect | Government Officials Behavior |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Random | Use lottery in allocation of government resources /requirements (e.g., Vietnam Lottery, Housing Lottery). | Researcher sends different requests to officials to see if equal access (e.g., audit studies). |
| Quasi-Experimental | Government randomly (or nearly so) rolls out a policy to different locations (e.g., food stamps). | Natural event occurs in one area. Compare with similar area without event (e.g., government spending after a hurricane). |

*Natural Public Policy Effect Experiments have control insofar as there is the decision of a lottery.

Outline

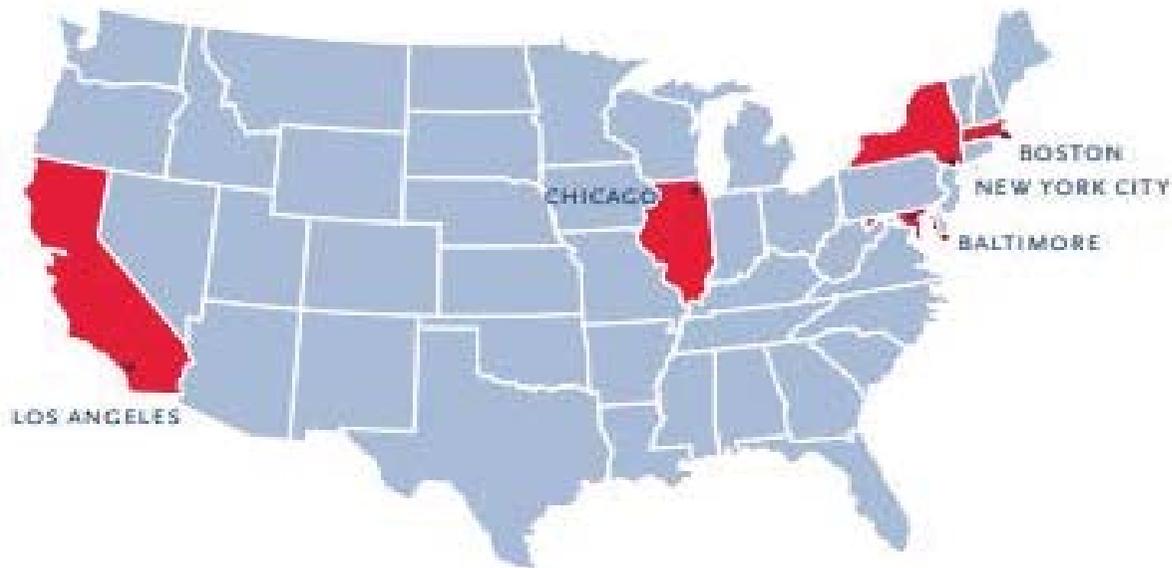
- Public policy effect experiments → lottery and quasi-experimental.
- A survey experiment on legislator responsiveness.
- Audit experiments on government responsiveness.
- Conclusion

Experiments on Public Policy Effects (Random)

- **Moving to Opportunity Experiment.**
- Implemented in 1994-1997 by the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development to study effects (e.g., on economic success) of low-income housing.
- Does the housing / neighborhood have an effect or are people just selecting into those areas?
- Carried out across 5 US cities: Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, LA, NY, 4,248 families.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

PHILIP AEHLÖCKE | NODONPROJECT.COM



MTO FAMILIES WERE ENROLLED IN FIVE CITIES: Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- Randomly selected from one of three conditions:
 - Control → families stayed in their low-income residencies.
 - Section 8 treatment → families had the option to rent a nicer private apartment in close proximity.
 - Treatment → families were asked to move to a neighborhood with a poverty rate less than 10%.
 - 61% of section 8 chose to move and 47% of treatment moved.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- Results collected in 2002 (4-7 years after experiment).
- Failed to show any definitive effects on the employment and earnings of parents.
- Slight effects on family's mental health.
- But not able to initially study long term effects.

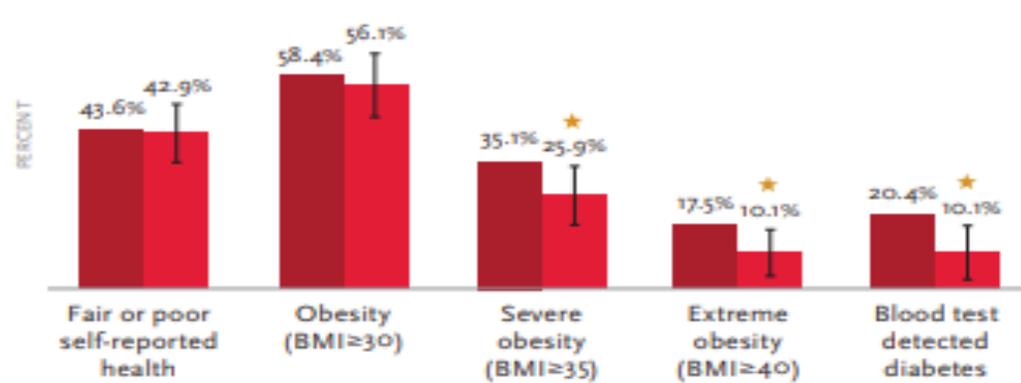
Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- 2015 team looked at data differently by separating out children into youth and older teens (>13).*
- Find moving to higher income neighborhoods had *dramatic* positive effects on long term success for *younger* children (i.e., higher income, more likely to attend college, more likely to have children with long term partner, better health on some indicators).
- It has inverse effects for teens (although not huge) – but shock of moving may have been bad.
- Point → better to move early.

*https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/Moving%20to%20Opportunity_0.pdf

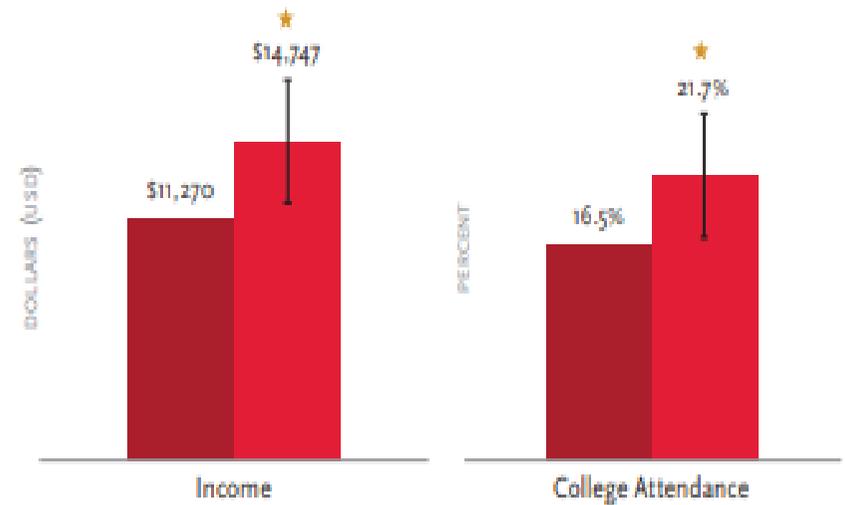
Experiments on Public Policy Effects

FIGURE 1. LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON ADULT HEALTH OUTCOMES



KEY: FIGURE 1 & FIGURE 2

- CONTROL MEAN
- EFFECT OF MOVING WITH A LOW-POVERTY VOUCHER
- I 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL
- ★ STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT FROM CONTROL GROUP

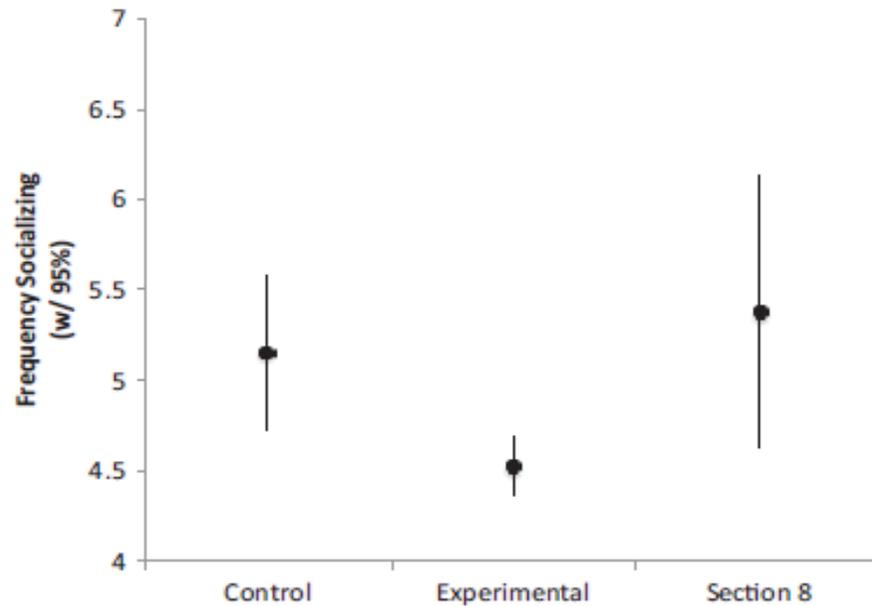


Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- **Political and Social Effects** → Control > Section 8 movers > treatment movers when it comes to voting turnout in 2004 and general socialization (Gay 2012).
- Reflects new costs of political participation as move away from social community that mobilizes and introduces new costs such as location new polling place.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- Lower social capital.



“Frequency Socialize” is a scale, with values ranging from 0 to 12, created by summing responses to two survey items: (1) During the past 30 days, about how often did you have friends or relatives over for dinner? (2) During the past 30 days, about how often have you visited with friends or relatives at their homes? “

Experiments on Public Policy Effects (Quasi-Experimental)

- **Minimum Wage and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania – David Card and Alan B. Krueger, 1994.**
- Minimum wage in US has a federal minimum and then state-based minimums.
- **Main lines of debate** → increases improve worker lives but leads to unemployment and lower wages.
- Does it lead to unemployment and lower wages?

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- **Does it lead to unemployment and lower wages?**
- **Method** → identified virtually identical (matched) areas of the United States: eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. New Jersey raised its minimum wage to \$5.05 per hour in 1992, whereas Pennsylvania stayed at \$4.25 an hour.
- **Fast Food Restaurant focus** → leading min. wage employer, expected to comply, homogenous across state borders, easy to survey/observe and high response rates.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

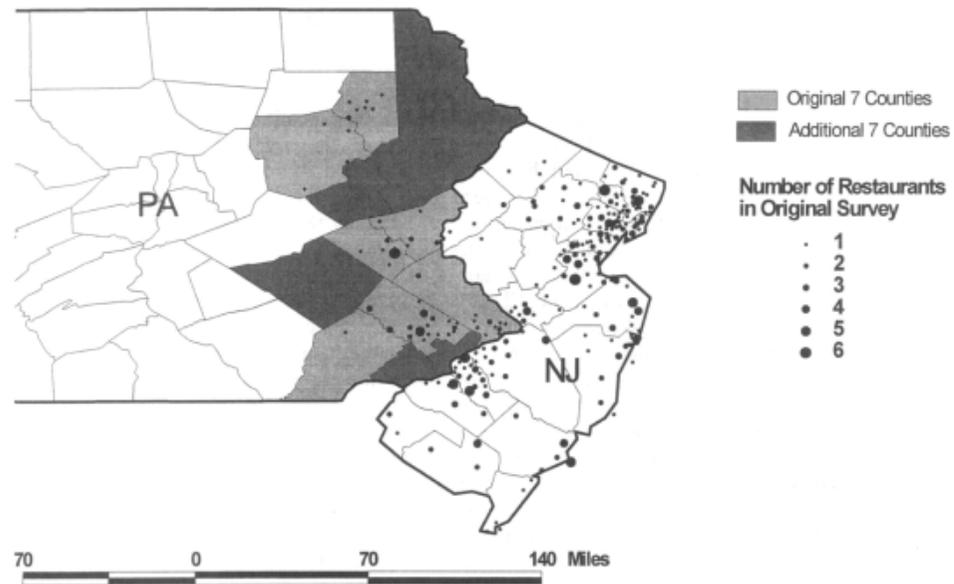


FIGURE 1. AREAS OF NEW JERSEY AND PENNSYLVANIA COVERED BY ORIGINAL SURVEY AND BLS DATA

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- Surveys →

- First wave of surveys a month before New Jersey's newly mandated minimum wage was scheduled to set in (N = 410, response rate = 87%).
- Second wave of surveys about 8 months later (99.8% response rate).
- Asked each chain about employment, starting wages, prices, and other store characteristics.

- Natural Experiment assumption →

- Chains do not differ based on location (e.g., virtually randomly chose where to set-up).
- Nothing but change in minimum wage occurred in one location but not the other.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- **Finding** → no evidence that New Jersey's rise in minimum wage had any sort of negative effect towards employment or the wage. If anything, the study actually finds the reverse: **the increase in minimum wage may have actually increased overall employment.**
- The study finds that after the increase in minimum wage in New Jersey, there was a stark **increase in fast food prices**, relative to Pennsylvania (\$0.06 increases vs. \$0.01 drop).
- This leads to study to consider most of the burden of the wage increase was passed on to the consumers, not the employees of fast food restaurants.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- Critiques →

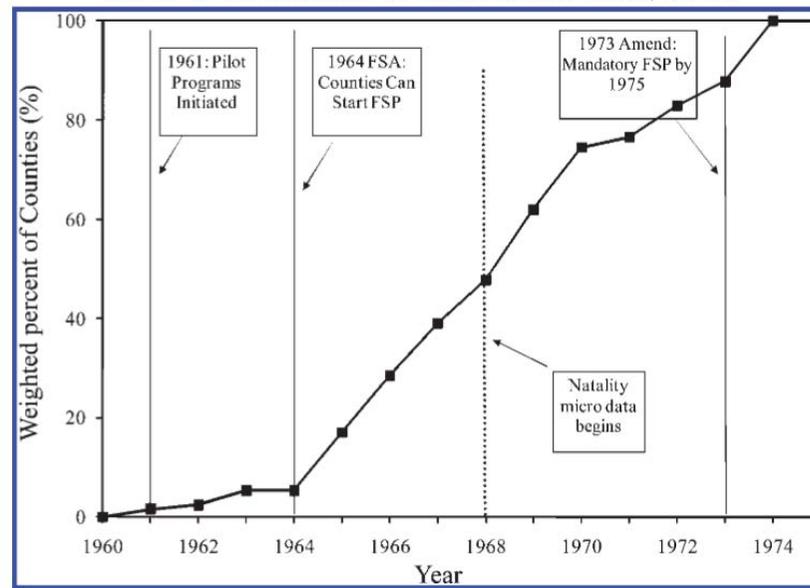
- The effect is longer term leading to negative employment effects over time and hurts younger workers (Meer and West).
- Need to separate “regular workers” and “low skilled” target workers. If separate, find, over time, a negative effect on low skilled target workers. In early 2000s, minimum wage increases 30% and employment in target population reduced .7% (Clemens and Wither).
- Has a negative effect labor intensive sector (e.g., “mom and pop diners”) even if not on capital intensive sector (chains) (Ropponen).
- Card and Kruger respond etc.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects (Quasi-Experimental)

- **Study of the impact of Food Stamp Program in 1960s on birth outcomes (Almond et al., Hoynes et al. 2012, 2014, 2016).**
- **Food stamp program** → provides food-purchasing assistance for low and no-income people living in the U.S.
- Pilot in 1961, expanded 1962-63, and Act of 1964 allowed local governments to set it up. After 1964, implementation more than doubled in counties. (Nationally required in 1975..)
- Did the program affect people's health and socio-economic outcome? Was it / is it a good investment?

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

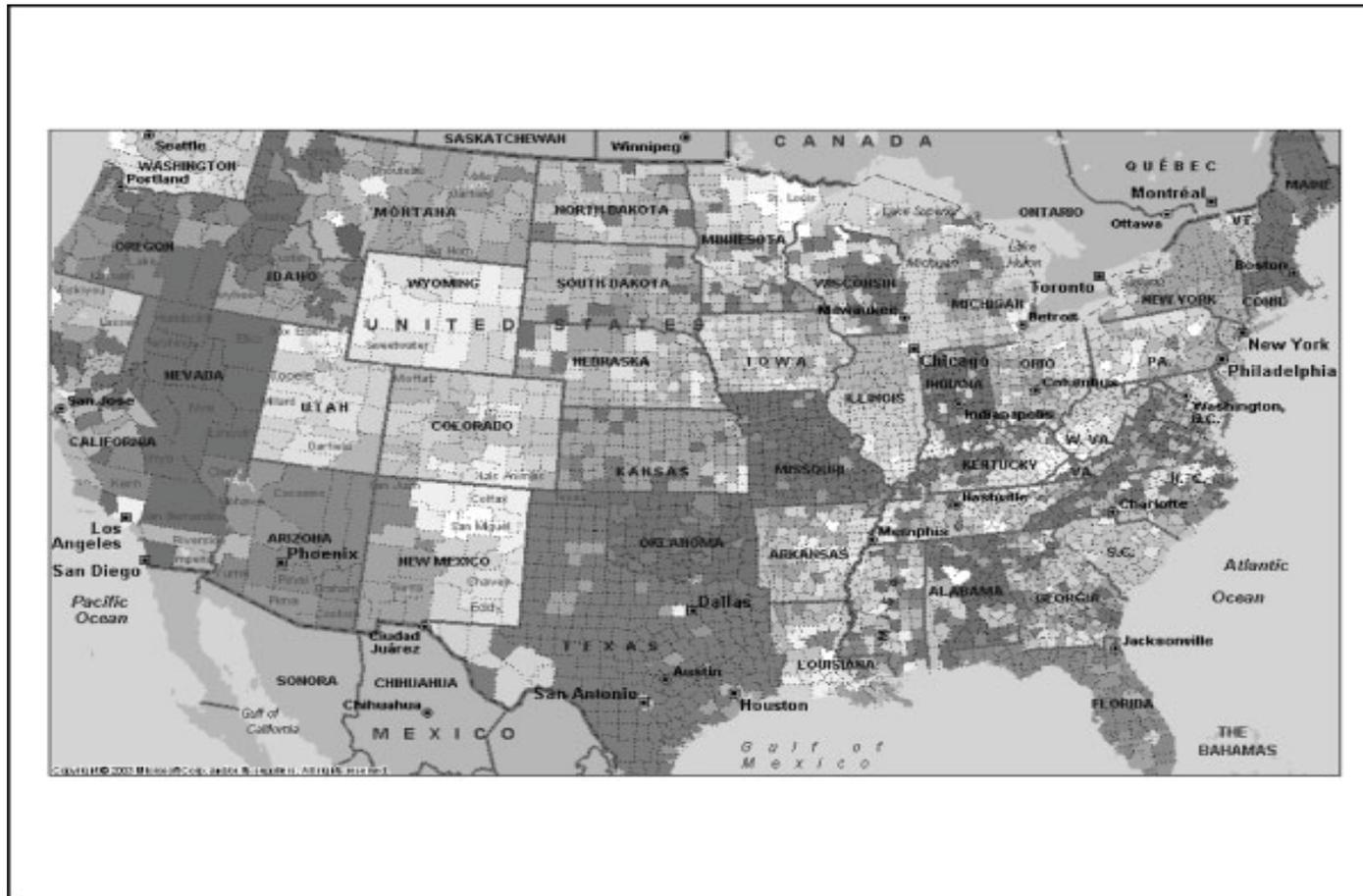
FIGURE 1.—WEIGHTED PERCENTAGE OF COUNTIES WITH A FOOD STAMP PROGRAM, 1960–1975



Authors' tabulations of food stamp administrative data (U.S. Department of Agriculture, various years). Counties are weighted by their 1960 population.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

Start dates of Food Stamps. **Darker shading indicates later county implementation.**



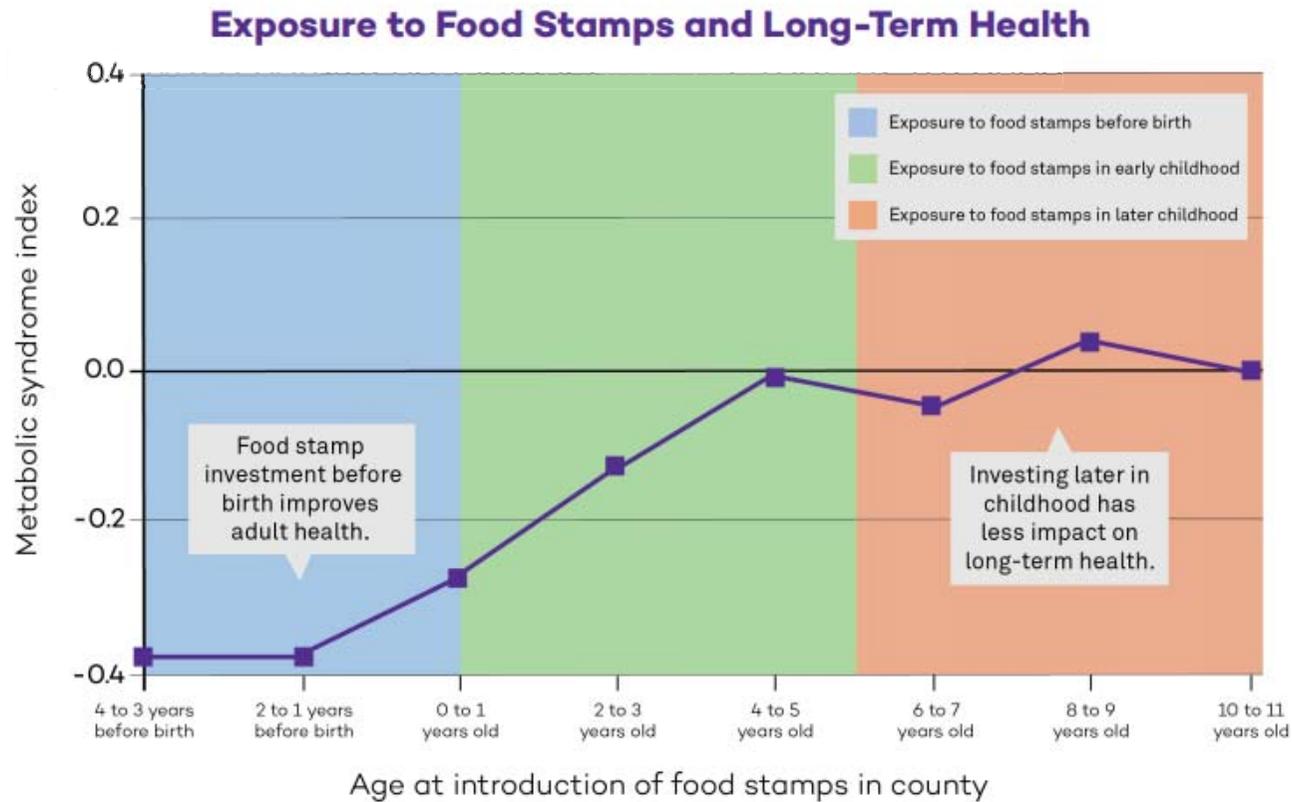
Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- Effective natural experiment →
 - Examine the month and year of each counties FSP adoption as the treatment variable.
 - Compare health outcomes, educational outcomes etc.
- Assumption is that implementation by counties if “as if” random → like a lottery.
 - Was not entirely random since low income, minority counties implemented more quickly but controlled for these.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects

- Increase ability of poor to purchase food and short-term health effects.
- Lower risk of later obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes.
- Improved high school graduation rate by 18% and women are more likely to be self-sufficient.
- Best if start access early →

Experiments on Public Policy Effects



Metabolic syndrome is a group of five risk factors that increase the likelihood of developing heart disease, diabetes, and stroke.

Experiments on Public Policy Effects Conclusions

- Effective approach – random or quasi-experimental – when possible.
- Political and ethical realities though present challenges.
- E.g., if know offering moving opportunities helps, is it ethical to not try to offer to all?
- Policy-makers should be on the look out for opportunities that natural emerge in policy implementation.

Outline

- Public policy effect experiments → lottery and quasi-experimental.
- A survey experiment on legislator responsiveness.
- Audit experiments on government responsiveness.
- Conclusion

Why Interested in Responsiveness?

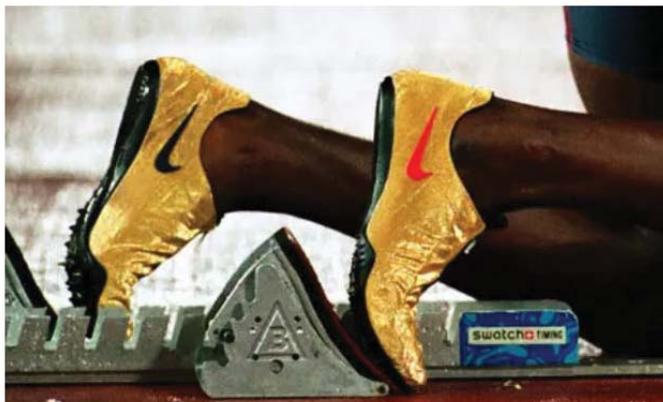
- Government officials make and implement policy.
- In theory, they should respond to citizens in an equal fashion, not based on content or source of citizens' requests (Dahl 1971).
- Experimental Approaches (when political and morally feasible a la Campbell 1969):
 - Some lab experiments (e.g., government negotiations).
 - Natural Experiments.
 - Survey experiments.
 - Field experiments particularly "audits."

Experiments on Public Official Responsiveness

- **Druckman and Valdes, 2019, *Quarterly Journal of Political Science***
- **Private politics** → when citizens and activists seek policy change outside the democratic legislative process.
- This includes boycotting companies and/or boycotting products so as to influence market practices (e.g., increased wages, more attention to environmental impact).
- Opposite of **public politics** which is seeking policy-change through governmental channels.

How activism forced Nike to change its ethical game

Twenty years of campaigning for workers' rights changed the corporate culture of one of the world's biggest brands - and the sportswear industry



▲ Problems still exist in Nike's supply chain but the corporation today operates with an openness and transparency that would have been unthinkable 20 years ago. Photograph: Neal Simpson/EMPICS Sports Photo Agency

Boycotts are a crucial weapon to fight environment-harming firms

April 6, 2014 4:08pm EDT



Furniture retailer Harvey Norman has been targeted by activists, in a campaign described by the federal government as dishonest. AAP Image/The Last Stand/Matthew Newton

9 awful companies everyone should boycott right now

You'll never want beef again after you find out what Conagra does on their production lines.

10 Reasons McDonald's Should Talk to Us



On Thursday, McDonald's workers in the Fight for \$15 launched a series of strikes demanding better pay, safer workplaces, and union rights. We're not stopping until McDonald's meets all of our demands. Here's why:

Does Private Politics Affect Government Behavior?

- Legislators may be less incentivized to respond to citizens' preferences when private politics is invoked. This occurs because legislators receive less credit for policy change and may view themselves as less necessary for policy-making.
- This may affect reactions to constituent communications (a type of representation).
- When private politics is invoked → legislators will not expect credit on policy, will thus not respond, and not move their own positions.

Does Private Politics Affect Government Behavior?

- **Prediction 1** → relative to a constituent communication referencing public politics, a communication referencing private politics will decrease the extent to which a legislator believes he or she can claim credit for a policy, all else constant.
- **Prediction 2** → relative to a constituent communication referencing public politics, a communication referencing private politics will decrease the extent to which a legislator will take action on the issue mentioned (e.g., sponsor legislation), all else constant.
- **Prediction 3** → Relative to a constituent communication referencing public politics, a communication referencing private politics will decrease the likelihood that a legislator will respond to the communication, all else constant.

Does Private Politics Affect Government Behavior?

- **Experimental Sample** → State legislators in 48 states.
- **Issue** → Request to raise minimum wage to \$15.
- **Time** → 2016.
- Asked them to complete a survey and consider a request from a hypothetical constituent.
- **Three conditions** → control, public politics, private politics.

“We are interested in how your office manages and responds to constituent emails. Please read this sample (hypothetical) email from a constituent and answer the questions that follow.”

“Dear [Representative/Senator],

“As your constituent, I’m writing about our state’s minimum wage with the hope of getting it increased to \$15. [TREATMENT]. We need a living minimum wage.”

[Randomly assigned to one of the following conditions.]

[Control]

“... I am doing so because I have been contacted by a group that is attempting to raise the minimum wage across the United States.”

[Public Politics]

“... I am doing so because I have been contacted by a group called *Fight for \$15* that is attempting to raise the minimum wage across the United States. The group is encouraging people to contact their state representatives. The group argues that taking actions by contacting representatives is the most effective way to communicate my opinion, generate a change in the minimum wage, and engage in politics. I believe in their mission, and have decided to participate in their campaign by contacting my state legislator.”

[Private Politics]

“... I am doing so because I have been contacted by a group called *Fight for \$15* that is attempting to raise the minimum wage across the United States. The group is encouraging people to boycott local businesses that have not raised their minimum wage to at least \$15. This group argues that taking actions against such businesses is the most effective way to communicate my opinion, generate a change in the minimum wage, and engage in politics. I believe in their mission, and plan to participate in their boycott. However, I also am asking for help from my state legislator.”

Key Outcome Measures

If there was a change in the minimum wage due to the group mentioned in the letter, how much credit do you think voters would attribute to the legislature?

No credit *Some credit* *A good deal of credit* *All credit*

How unlikely or likely would you be to sponsor new legislation in favor of an increase in your state's minimum wage?

Very unlikely *Somewhat unlikely* *Slightly unlikely* *Neither unlikely nor likely* *Slightly likely* *Somewhat likely* *Very likely*

How unlikely or likely would you be to move your policy position in support of increasing your state's minimum wage?

Very unlikely *Somewhat unlikely* *Slightly unlikely* *Neither unlikely nor likely* *Slightly likely* *Somewhat likely* *Very likely*

How unlikely or likely would you be to respond to this e-mail?

Very unlikely *Somewhat unlikely* *Slightly unlikely* *Neither unlikely nor likely* *Slightly likely* *Somewhat likely* *Very likely*

Results

| | (1) Legislature credit | (2) Interest group credit | (3) Sponsor | (4) Move position |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Public politics e-Mail | 0.250 (0.123) | -0.266 (0.115) | 0.406 (0.119) | 0.391 (0.113) |
| Private politics e-Mail | -0.355 (0.122) | 0.268 (0.123) | 0.216 (0.122) | 0.071 (0.124) |
| Age | 0.001 (0.031) | 0.069 (0.032) | 0.072 (0.031) | 0.059 (0.031) |
| Female | -0.023 (0.104) | -0.149 (0.103) | -0.005 (0.106) | 0.178 (0.101) |
| Minority | -0.280 (0.147) | 0.487 (0.135) | 0.201 (0.135) | 0.157 (0.140) |
| Republican | -0.072 (0.105) | 0.118 (0.102) | -1.799 (0.112) | -1.354 (0.104) |
| Significant difference between public/ private conditions? | YES ($p \leq 0.01$) | YES ($p \leq 0.01$) | NO ($p \leq 0.12$) | YES ($p \leq 0.01$) |
| Log-likelihood | -538.41 | -566.13 | -769.95 | -802.57 |
| N | 499 | 496 | 527 | 519 |

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. A full table with constant cut-points is available in the Appendix.

- Reference to private politics causes legislators to expect *less credit for policy change, and be less likely to sponsor legislation or move their positions on the issue.*

Results

| | (1) Respond | (2) Mention legislation | (3) Mention interest groups |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Public politics e-Mail | 0.197 (0.126) | 0.211 (0.118) | -0.201 (0.108) |
| Private politics e-Mail | -0.194 (0.120) | 0.561 (0.136) | 0.254 (0.123) |
| Age | -0.006 (0.032) | 0.001 (0.032) | 0.082 (0.030) |
| Female | 0.234 (0.112) | 0.217 (0.112) | 0.115 (0.101) |
| Minority | -0.362 (0.135) | -0.120 (0.166) | 0.188 (0.134) |
| Republican | -0.139 (0.104) | -0.599 (0.107) | -0.367 (0.101) |
| Significant difference between public/private conditions? | YES ($p \leq 0.01$) | YES ($p \leq 0.01$) | YES ($p \leq 0.01$) |
| Log-likelihood | -701.51 | -662.67 | -884.32 |
| <i>N</i> | 543 | 525 | 520 |

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. A full table with constant cut-points is available in the Appendix.

- Reference to private politics causes legislators to be less responsive.

Conclusions

- The effects hold only for Republicans (sensible given it is an issue that they typically would not support).
- **Implication** → private political activities can undermine legislative responsiveness since legislators lose control (also see Malhotra et al. 2019). This could make NGOs and citizens less likely to work through public political channels, and lead to an unfortunate spiral.
- In studying democratic responsiveness, need to account for private politics.

Outline

- Public policy effect experiments → lottery and quasi-experimental.
- A survey experiment on legislator responsiveness.
- Audit experiments on government responsiveness.
- Conclusion

Audit Experiments on Government Responsiveness

- **Field experiments** → where the treatment, which is assigned by the researcher, is delivered in naturalistic settings, often unobtrusively.
- **Advantage** → assessment of effects in naturalistic contexts.
- **Challenges** →
 - compliance (do those in the treatment group receive the treatment),
 - attrition (can those in the study be followed for measurement),
 - spillover (will those in the treatment talk to those in the control),
 - constrained geographically for generalization.
- Naturalistic nature make them attractive to study market institutions (micro-finance), policy interventions, discrimination, mobilization, persuasion, etc.

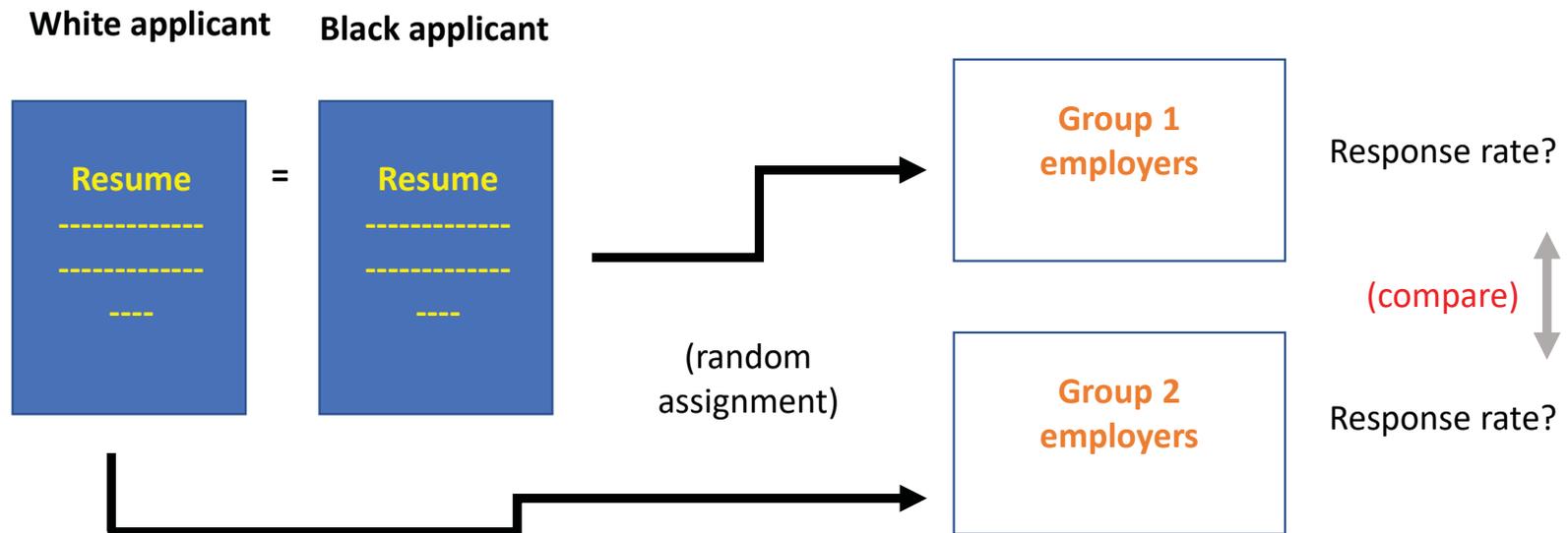
Focus is on Discrimination

- **Discrimination** → “unequal treatment of persons or groups on the basis of their race or ethnicity” or some other attribute (Pager and Shepherd 2007: 182).
 - May be due to differential treatment based on attribute or disparate impact due to skewed rules.
 - Distinct from prejudice, racism, stereotypes.
- **Why care? (as mentioned)**
 - Value equality.
 - Non-discrimination legal protections based on particular attributes.
 - Ideal democratic government officials treat citizens’ input equally – no discrimination based on content or source of preference ((Dahl 1956, 1971)

Audit Experiments on Government Responsiveness

- **Audit or correspondence** → field experiment approach to study discrimination.
- Researchers send out fictitious or real but controlled applications that are identical but for randomly varied dimensions of interest → applicant's race, religion, age, gender, disability, etc.
- Send applicants into a social situation.
 - E.g., job interviews.
- Due to random assignment, disparate outcomes across these dimensions are *caused by* the differences in these dimensions
- **Point is to “audit” a market for bias.**

Audit Study Logic



Audit Studies

- Job market may be most common usage → 90 published audit studies on hiring discrimination between 2005 and 2016 (Baert 2018, also see Neumark 2018 for exhaustive review).
- Naturalistic nature it useful for studying a behavior.
- Also limits to social desirability bias.

Audit Study Varieties

- Approach →
 - In-person audits → Real human beings (confederates) serve as the treatment,
 - Correspondence studies → Fictitious profiles (such as resumés) – delivered online, in person, by mail, or over the phone – serve as the treatment.
- Design →
 - Paired (matched) vs. non-paired audits.
 - Do targets see only one auditor/profile each, or more than one?

Brief History of Audit Studies

- **Earliest examples were non-academic** → efforts by the British Race Relations Board to identify discrimination in housing and employment in the 1960s; non-academic fair housing audits in the U.S. in the 1970s (Gaddis 2018)
- **Initial focus** →
 - on race (white vs. black) but expanded to examine other social dimensions.
 - on housing and employment but grew to encompass a wider range of situations.
- **Approach** →
 - Initially large-scale audits tended to rely on large teams of researchers (employed, e.g., by HUD) and in person confederates.
 - Technology (e-mail) made it easier for academics to execute large-scale audits themselves.

Brief History of Audit Studies

- **Examples of manipulated characteristics** → race, ethnicity, gender, age, criminal record, disability, immigration status, mental health, military service, parental status, physical appearance, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, social class, unemployment status (Gaddis 2018).
- **Examples of Outcomes** → job interview offers, job offers, housing inquiry responses, response to roommate requests, doctor's appointment scheduling, responsiveness from bureaucrats or elected officials, responsiveness from professors, the price paid for bargained goods (Gaddis 2018).

Audit Studies Presented

- **Job Market** → Pager (2003), effects of a criminal record on hiring.
- **Elected Officials** →
 - Butler and Broockman (2011), effects of race on state legislators' responsiveness to constituent inquiries.
- **Government Officials** →
 - White, Nathan, and Faller (2015), effects of Latino identity on election officials' responsiveness.
 - Hemker and Rink (2017), effects of five traits on German welfare offices' responsiveness to inquiries.
- **Educational settings** →
 - Pfaff, Crabtree, Kern, and Holbein (2018), effects of religion on school principal responsiveness.
 - Druckman and Shafranek (2019), effects of race and partisanship on higher education requests.
 - Brown and Hilbig (2018), effects of incarnation on higher education requests.

Pager (2003) – Job Market

- **“The Mark of a Criminal Record,” American Journal of Sociology 108(5): 937-975, 2003.**
- Consequences of previous incarceration on employment prospects for white and black job seekers (in Milwaukee).
- Does incarceration *cause* poor employment prospects, or is the relationship spurious?
 - E.g., alcohol/drug abuse + behavioral problems + poor interpersonal skills → both incarceration *and* worse employment outcomes.

Pager (2003)

- In-person audit of 350 job openings.
- 4 auditors: 2 black, 2 white.
- Paired approach (by race); auditors matched on physical appearance and self-presentation.
- Within each two-person team, one person randomly assigned to have a “criminal record.”
 - Teams → --white non-criminal, white criminal.
--black non-criminal, black criminal.
- Pairs applied to entry-level jobs in Milwaukee.
- Physically visited employers and filled out applications.

Pager (2003)

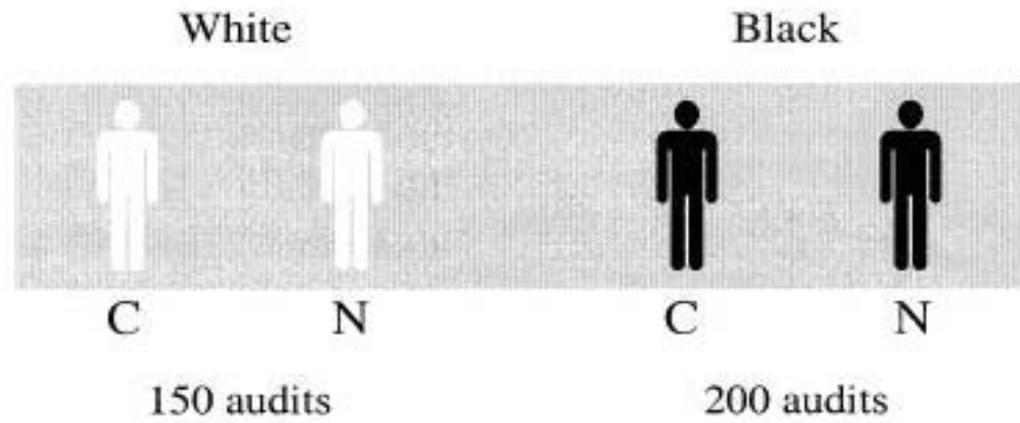
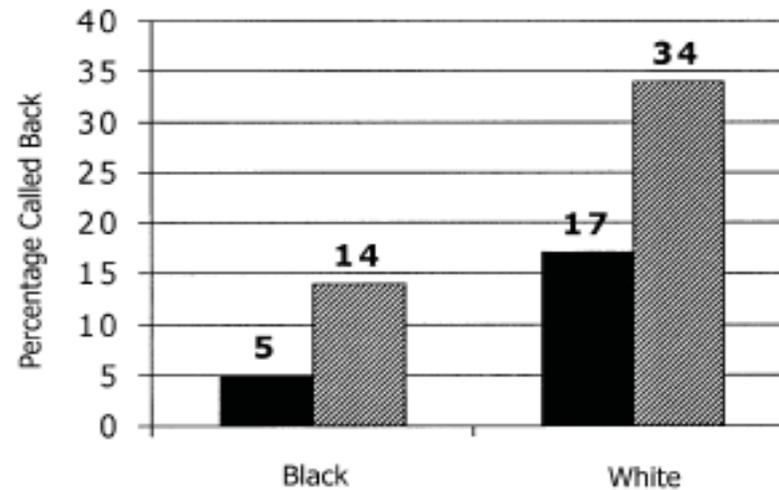


FIG. 3.—Audit design: “C” refers to criminal record; “N” refers to no criminal record

Outcome → callbacks for an interview or job offer.

Pager (2003)



- Callback rate always lower for blacks.
- Callback rate was 50% lower for whites with a criminal record compared to whites without a criminal record.
- Callback rate was 71% lower for blacks with a criminal record compared to blacks without a criminal record.

Pager (2003) inspired Ban the Box Campaign

How it Began: The **Ban the Box** campaign was started by **All of Us or None**, a national civil rights movement of formerly-incarcerated people and our families. We started the campaign in 2004, after a series of Peace and Justice Community Summits identified job and housing discrimination as huge barriers to our successfully returning to our communities after jail or prison. The campaign challenges the stereotypes of people with conviction histories by asking employers to choose their best candidates based on job skills and qualifications, *not* past convictions. Since 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. has a conviction history, the impact of this discrimination is widespread and affects other aspects of life in addition to employment opportunity.



Campaign's Success to Date: Today over 45 cities and counties, including New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Seattle, and San Francisco have removed the question regarding conviction history from their employment applications. Seven states, Hawai'i, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Minnesota, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, have changed their hiring practices in public employment to reduce discrimination based on arrest or conviction records. Some cities and counties and the state of Massachusetts have also required their vendors and private employers to adopt these fair hiring policies. In some areas, private employers are also voluntarily adopting ban the box hiring policies.

Quillian et al. Meta-Analyses of Job Market Audits

- Meta-analysis of 28 studies over the past 25 years. Whites receive 36% more callbacks than African- Americans, and 24% more callbacks than Latinos.
 - **No change in the level of discrimination** against African-Americans over the past 25 years. Modest evidence of a decline in discrimination against Latinos.
- Meta-analysis of 12 studies that include job offer outcome. **Additional discrimination in hiring after the callback** → Majority applicants receive 52% more callbacks, *and* 128% more job offers than comparable minority applicants.
 - Discrimination from interview to job offer is uncorrelated with the level of discrimination earlier in the hiring process.
- Meta-analysis of 97 studies in nine countries. Significant discrimination against nonwhite natives in all countries; discrimination against white immigrants is present but low.
 - **Variation is LARGE** with France/Sweden having the most.

Butler and Broockman (2011) – Legislative Responsiveness

- **“Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators,” *American Journal of Political Science* 55(3): 463-477, 2011.**
- How does race (and partisanship) affect state legislators’ responsiveness to constituent requests?
- Specifically, requests for information about registering to vote.

Butler and Broockman (2011)

- Sent email requests to state legislators (in 44 states with publicly listed email addresses).
- Each legislator received just *one* request (i.e., a non-paired design).
- Varied →
 - Race via name.
 - Partisanship via explicit mention.

Butler and Broockman (2011)

Table Box 1 . Email Sent to State Legislators

From: [*Treatment Name*]

To: [*Legislator's Email Address*]

Subject: A Question on Registering to Vote

Dear [*Representative/Senator*][*Legislator's Last Name*],

My name is [*Treatment Name*] and I'm trying to figure out how to register to vote for the upcoming election. I heard that the voter registration deadline is soon.

Who should I call in order to register? Also, is there anything special I need to do when I register so that I can vote in future [*{blank}/Democratic/Republican*] primary elections?

Thanks,

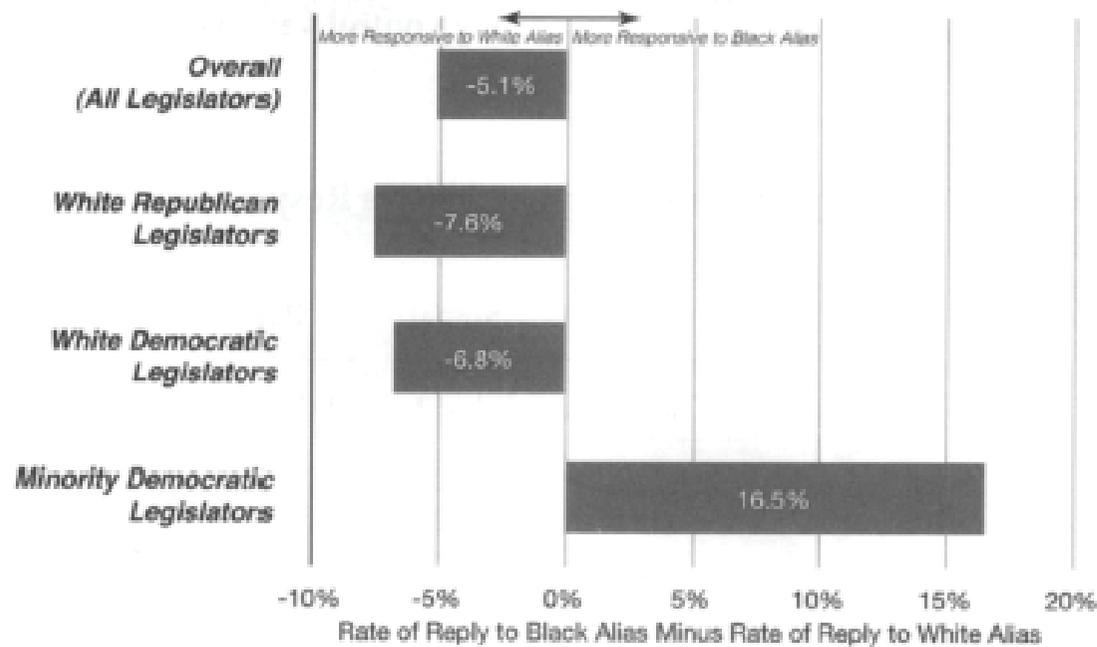
[*Treatment Name*]

Butler and Broockman (2011)

- Outcome → any response.

FIGURE 1 Heterogeneous Levels of Differential Treatment among Subgroups of Legislators

Differential Treatment Legislators Practiced, By Legislators' Characteristics



Butler and Broockman (2011)

- When add party cues to request → partisans respond to co-partisans with the only significant race effect being Democrats are more responsive to African American Democrats.
- Most notable → White Democratic legislator discrimination and non-partisan blacks.

Butler and Broockman (2011)

- Minority legislators respond less overall, complicates descriptive representation.
 - 16.5% increased response to minority vs. -6.8% for Democrats.
 - Overall, white Democrats responded 54% to African-American requests versus 46% for African-American requests. (African-American Democrats only responded to about 30% of white requests.)
 - Is that due to disproportional safe districts for African-American Democrats?
- Should descriptive representation be based on overall response or differential response?
- Costa (2017) meta-analysis of more than 50 studies. Average black effect is -7.1%, Hispanic effect is about -10%.

White, Nathan, and Faller (2015) – Government Officials

- “What do I need to vote? Bureaucratic discretion and discrimination by local election officials,” *American Political Science Review*, 109(1): 129-142, 2015.
- Looks at “street-level” bureaucrats implementing voting laws.
- Do they discriminate (in terms of providing information) to would-be voters based on Latino (vs. white) identity? Do they discriminate based on topic?



White, Nathan, and Faller (2015)

- Correspondence study.
- Emailed 6,825 election officials in 48 states.
- One message per official.
- Varied →
 - Voter ID laws vs. voting in primaries/general elections (control)
 - Signal Latino/white identity with names (2 Latino names, 2 white names)

White, Nathan, and Faller (2015)

Voter ID message:

Hello,

I've been hearing a lot about voter ID laws on the news. What do I need to do to vote?

Thank you,

(Jose Martinez, Jake Mueller, Luis Rodriguez, or Greg Walsh)

"Control" message:

Hello,

I've been wondering about this. Do you have to vote in the primary election to be allowed to vote in the general elections?

Thank you,

(Jose Martinez, Jake Mueller, Luis Rodriguez, or Greg Walsh)

White, Nathan, and Faller (2015)

- Outcome = response rate, response accuracy (i.e., did responses accurately reflect state voting laws?).
- Results →
 - Overall rate = 71%
 - Only 46% responded accurately to question about voter ID laws.
 - Bias against Latinos (4 percentage points less likely to receive a response).
 - Less accurate responses in states with voter ID laws than those without.

Hemker and Rink (2017)

- **“Multiple Dimensions of Bureaucratic Discrimination: Evidence from German Welfare Offices,” American Journal of Political Science 61(4): 786-803, 2017.**
- What traits are related to responsiveness from German welfare bureaucrats?
- What do we miss when we focus solely on response rates (see White et al. study)?

Hemker and Rink (2017)

- Argue that “depending on how the multiple dimensions of quality are correlated with one another, restricting attention to response rates can produce misleading or outright false conclusions about discrimination.”
- E.g., minorities may receive responses at the same rate, suggesting no discrimination; however, those responses may actually be of *substantially lower quality* (and thus discrimination exists).

Hemker and Rink (2017)

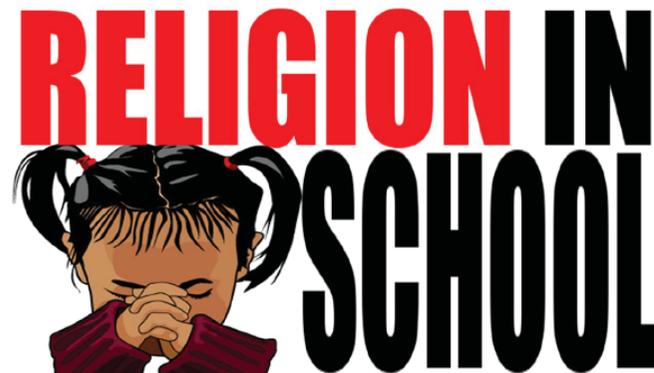
- Correspondence study.
- Varied →
 - Ethnicity.
 - Gender.
 - “Skill.”
 - Formality (vs. informality).
 - Legal support.
- Sent inquiries to all 408 German welfare offices (one per office) asking about what paperwork is necessary to obtain benefits.

Hemker and Rink (2017)

- Outcome = response and content (*quality*) of response.
- **Results →**
 - Overall response rate of 78%; rates were almost identically distributed across the treatment conditions
 - *However*, non-Germans (Turks and Romanians) received responses that were substantively inferior
 - Responses to non-Germans score 27% lower on quality measure as compared to responses given to German applicants (**quality measured as including more information about the question being asked concerning paperwork to get benefits**).

Pfaff, Crabtree, Kern, and Holbein (2018) – Educational settings

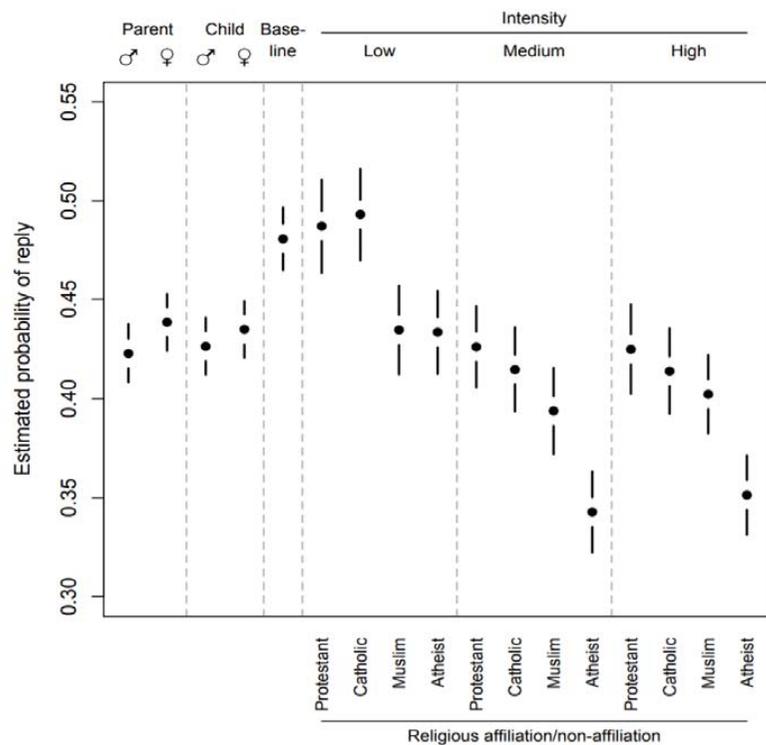
- **“Does religious bias shape access to public services? A large-scale audit experiment among street-level bureaucrats.” 2018.**
- Do individuals face barriers to receiving public services based on their religious affiliation?
- Does belief intensity make a difference?
- Look specifically at public school principals.



Pfaff, Crabtree, Kern, and Holbein (2018)

- Correspondence study.
- Emailed 45,000 public school principals requesting a meeting.
- Randomly assigned religious affiliation and belief intensity of the requesters.
- Varied →
 - Parent's gender (male/female).
 - Child's gender (male/female).
 - Religious affiliation (Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, atheist).
 - Belief intensity (low/identification, medium/compatibility inquiry, high/accommodation request).

Pfaff, Crabtree, Kern, and Holbein (2018)



- Outcome = response rate.
- Results →
 - Substantial discrimination against Muslims and atheists.
 - Increasing discrimination with greater belief intensity.
 - No discrimination against Protestants and Catholics unless they signal that their beliefs are intense.

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

- **“The Intersection of Racial and Partisan Discrimination: Evidence from a Correspondence Study of Four-Year Colleges,” *The Journal of Politics*, 2019.**
- What are the independent and intersectional effects of partisanship on requests in educational settings?

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

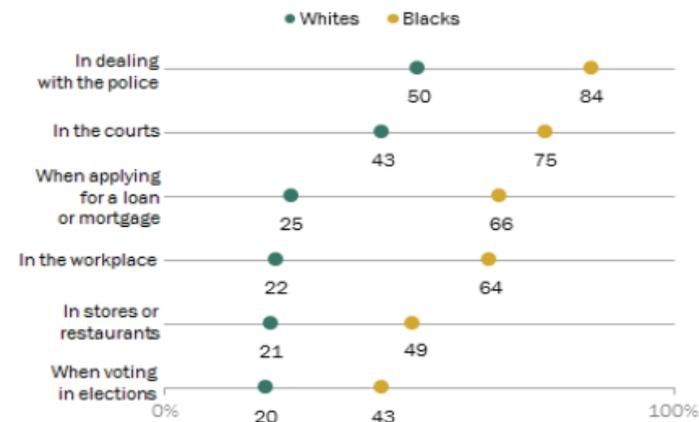


- Index of polarization (Boxell et al. 2018).

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

Perceptions of how blacks are treated in the U.S. vary widely by race

% saying blacks are treated less fairly than whites in the country



Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 29-May 8, 2016. Q19F2a-f.
"On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- Police perceptions 2007-2016: 35%/75% → 50%/84%
- Workplace 2007-2016: 12%/56% → 22%/64%

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

- Studies impact of
 - partisan discrimination
 - racial discrimination
 - discrimination against minority partisans (racial threat theory)
- In higher education in US where questions of racial discrimination and partisan homogeneity/discrimination are great.

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

- All accredited degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States that offered at least one bachelor's degree program per the National Center for Education Statistics as of 2016 = 2,590 schools.
- Team of students located e-mail contacts.
 - *Excluded:* women's only schools, *only on-line contact form*, duplicate information with another school (e.g. some branch campuses), no longer exists, unable to find contact information.
- **Final sample** → 1,526 schools.

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

- Sending an e-mail requesting more information about the school to each contact.
- Varied two factors → race and political reference.

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

- Sender address and signature came from a name connoting an African-American male or a White male.
 - Jabari Washington or Dalton Wood.
 - *Ensure Race is what varies.*

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

- (1) **No politics** → active with a civics club.
- (2) **Politically engaged** → active with club that organizes political discussions.
- (3) **Democratic** → active with the Young Democrats.
- (4) **Republican** → active with the Young Republicans.

Otherwise, the content of the e-mail provided some personal background information, such as extracurricular involvement, etc.

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

Subject Line: Prospective Student Inquiry

Dear [full name of school] Admissions,

I'm writing to obtain more information about [full name of school]. I'm a high school junior and I think your school would be a great fit for me. I have done well academically and have been involved in many extracurricular activities.

I have been a member of an intramural sports club and a theater club. I also am passionate about [the community and have been active with a civics club / politics and have been active with a club that organizes political discussions and debates / politics and have been active with the Young Democrats / politics and have been active with the Young Republicans]. I hope to continue with these types of activities on your campus.

I would like to speak with an admissions counselor or a currently enrolled student who can tell me more about [full name of school]. Can you please let me know who I should get in touch with?

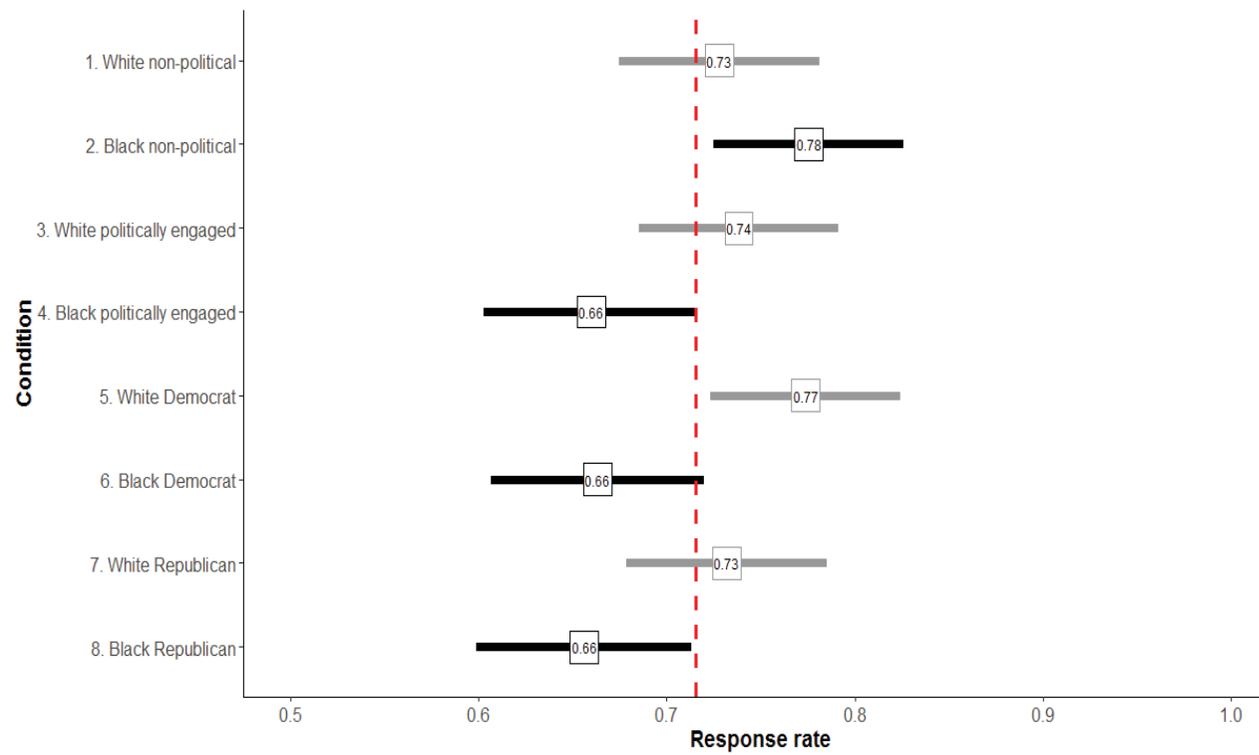
Sincerely,

[Dalton Wood /Jabari Washington]

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

| Condition | Name | Text |
|--|-------------------|---|
| (1) White Non-Political | Dalton Wood | "...been active with a civics club..." |
| (2) African-American Non-Political | Jabari Washington | "...been active with a civics club..." |
| (3) White Politically Engaged | Dalton Wood | "... been active with a club that organizes political discussions..." |
| (4) African-American Politically Engaged | Jabari Washington | "... been active with a club that organizes political discussions..." |
| (5) White Democrat | Dalton Wood | "...been active with the Young Democrats..." |
| (6) African-American Democrat | Jabari Washington | "...been active with the Young Democrats..." |
| (7) White Republican | Dalton Wood | "... been active with the Young Republicans..." |
| (8) African-American Republican | Jabari Washington | "... been active with the Young Republicans..." |

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)



Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

| | (1) | (2) |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | E-Mail Response | E-Mail Response |
| African-American | 0.256 (0.239) | 0.245 (0.240) |
| Democrat | 0.086 (0.160) | -0.545* (0.432) |
| Republican | -0.033 (0.158) | 0.070 (0.420) |
| Political Mention | 0.086 (0.210) | 0.083 (0.210) |
| Af. Am. X Political | -0.692*** (0.272) | -0.684*** (0.273) |
| Clinton Vote Share | | -0.746* (0.470) |
| Clinton Vote X | | -0.199 (0.782) |
| Republican | | |
| Clinton Vote X | | 1.296* (0.828) |
| Democrat | | |
| Constant | 0.983*** (0.163) | 1.351*** (0.285) |
| Log-Likelihood | -901.27 | -897.57 |
| Observations | 1,521 | 1,518 |

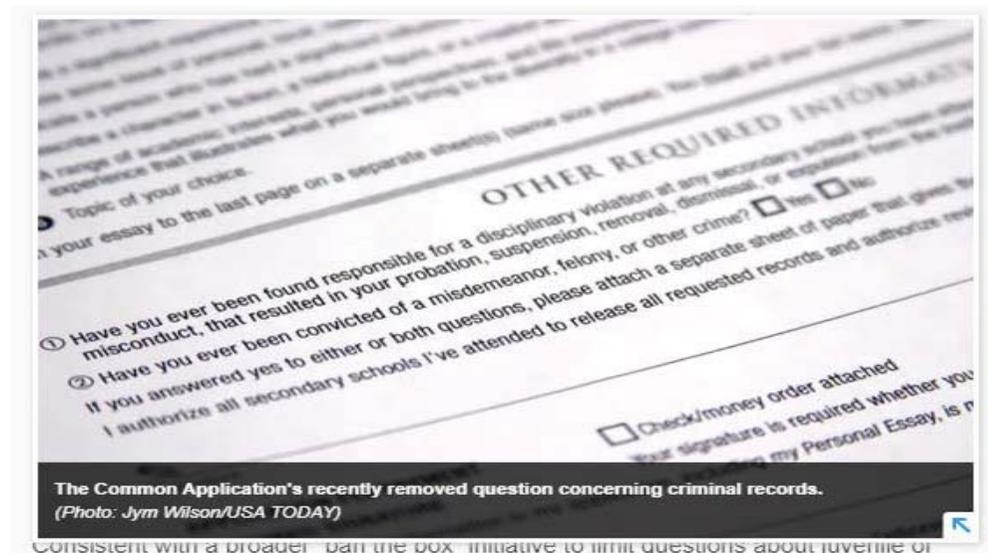
- VERY clear support for racial threat hypothesis.
- Support for Partisan Discrimination for *Democrats*.
- Change → 4.78%. Similar to Gift and Gift's (2015) study of partisan job market discrimination in a liberal and a conservative county.

Druckman and Shafranek (2019)

- Consider partisan discrimination in higher education studies.
- Attend to the interaction of partisan X race discrimination.
- Is a specific application of racial threat theory.
- Leaves minorities in a double bind.

Brown and Hilbig (2018)

- “Locked out of College: When Admissions Bureaucrats Do and Do Not Discriminate.” Working Paper.
- How do race and a criminal record influence college admissions decisions?
- Can “advocates” make a difference → **correct bias**? (Also see Butler and Crabtree (2017) on effects to correct for racial bias among government officials.)



Consistent with a broader "ban the box" initiative to limit questions about juvenile or

Brown and Hilbig (2018)

- Correspondence audit study.
- Emails to 2,934 college admissions offices.

| Treatment | Implementation |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Criminal record of applicant | Obtained GED in prison / online |
| Race of applicant: Black / White | Signaled via name of applicant |
| Advocate vouches for the applicant | Email is sent by a former teacher |
| Race of advocate: Black / White | Signaled via name of advocate |

Note: This table describes the implementation of the four treatment conditions.

Criminal Record/Advocate Treatment

From: [EMAIL ADDRESS]
To: [ADMISSIONS EMAIL ADDRESS]
Subject: Admissions Info

Hello,

A past student of mine, [APPLICANT NAME], is interested in applying to [SCHOOL], but is worried he is not eligible. He has his GED, which he got at [PENITENTIARY]. Does this affect his eligibility? What else does he need to apply? Are you currently accepting applications?

Thank You,

[INSTRUCTOR NAME]

No Criminal Record/Advocate Treatment

From: [EMAIL ADDRESS]
To: [ADMISSIONS EMAIL ADDRESS]
Subject: Admissions Info

Hello,

A past student of mine, [APPLICANT NAME], is interested in applying to [SCHOOL], but is worried he is not eligible. He has his GED, which he got online. Does this affect his eligibility? What else does he need to apply? Are you currently accepting applications?

Thank You,

[INSTRUCTOR NAME]

Criminal Record/ No Advocate

From: [EMAIL ADDRESS]
To: [ADMISSIONS EMAIL ADDRESS]
Subject: Admissions Info

Hello,

I am interested in applying to [SCHOOL], but I am worried I am not eligible. I have my GED, which I got at [PENITENTIARY]. Does this affect my eligibility? What else do I need to apply? Are you currently accepting applications?

Thank You,

[APPLICANT NAME]

No Criminal Record/ No Advocate

From: [EMAIL ADDRESS]
To: [ADMISSIONS EMAIL ADDRESS]
Subject: Admissions Info

Hello,

I am interested in applying to [SCHOOL], but I am worried I am not eligible. I have my GED, which I got online. Does this affect my eligibility? What else do I need to apply? Are you currently accepting applications?

Thank You,

[APPLICANT NAME]

Note: The figure shows that exact wording of the emails that we sent to the colleges in the sample. In total, there are $2*2*2*2=16$ different treatment conditions. In this figure, we only show that differences in email wording for the *Criminal Record* and *Advocate* treatments. Applicant and advocate race are signaled using putatively Black or White names, while the email text stays the same.

Brown and Hilbig (2018)

- **Outcome:** → response rate, friendliness and thoroughness of the response.
- **Results** →
 - Applicants with criminal records are 5.2% less likely to receive responses. Individual schools should stop asking?
 - No statistically significant difference in responses to applicants with black and white names.
 - Emails sent by advocates were 3.4% more likely to receive a response.
 - Similar patterns re: friendliness and thoroughness.
 - Discrimination is driven by private schools (10% less likely to reply to formerly incarcerated applicants).

Audit Study Summary

- Audit studies document naturalistic biases across a range of decisions, offering a way around social desirability issues.
- A wide variety of issues and social dimensions have been studied using this approach → including job market, legislative responsiveness, government official responsiveness, and educational responsiveness.
- Increasing attention to challenges and ethical concerns →

Theoretical Audit Study Challenges

- Difficult to speak to the mechanisms behind discrimination (taste-based vs. statistical; unconscious vs. conscious, etc.)
- Limited outcome measures beyond response (e.g., looking content of responses requires identifying assumptions, Coppock 2019).
- Do non-responses translate to other biases (e.g., in the aggregate workforce, voting behavior)?

Practical Audit Study Challenges

- Do the messages have construct validity – signaling what are supposed to signal? How to deal with variance in interpretations across population of respondents? (Crabtree and Chykina 2018).
- Are the messages confounded (e.g., race signals class)?
- Are messages realistic/typical (consistent with what is believable)?
- Potential spoiled pools from over usages (e.g., US state legislators).
- Logistical challenges even if e-mail (e.g., mail merges).

Audit Study Ethics

- Audit respondents (bureaucrats, legislators, employers, etc.) do not consent to participate. Is “virtual” consent sufficient?
- Many people report they would prefer not to be included in field experiments without their consent (Desposato 2018).
- It takes some of their time... how much is too much?
- Opportunity costs (e.g., in job interviews to those not interviewed).
- Few direct serious individual risks – but what about aggregate risks? E.g., if bureaucrats or elected officials start getting contacted by lots of fake constituents (due to many audits), they may reallocate their time / focus (Desposato 2018).
- Do the benefits outweigh the costs?

Overall Conclusions

- The ideal “experimenting” society is not realistic due to political and ethical challenges.
- Experiments still hold much promise in studying government behavior → both effects of public policy and responsiveness to citizens.
- Public policy effect experiment are feasible, either with lotteries or analogous processes.
- Experiments on responsiveness are relatively new and promising. Next steps involves understanding mechanisms, antidotes, and considering ethical challenges.

THANK YOU

