

Racial inequality in employment



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Racial Inequality

Racial inequality exists in our society in several different forms and places people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds at a disadvantage. The institutional racial inequality my paper will be focusing on is discrimination in hiring. Discrimination in hiring affects minorities, primarily blacks and Hispanics, by putting them at a disadvantage when it comes to being hired for a job. White people have the advantage and are favored when it comes to being hired for a job. Minorities are also found to earn less money than white people when they are employed.

These findings have brought into question whether employers treat different races differently. Some people argue that employers definitely favor white people over minorities due to their implicit biases or opinion on how the race of the applicant affects how productive they are in the workplace. Studies have found that minority applicants are even channeled down when applying for jobs, meaning they apply for a job but are encouraged to accept a job that is below the job they are applying for (a sales associate to a stocker). This inequality leaves minorities out of work, unable to provide for their families and pay their bills. They can lose their cars, houses and possibly have to turn to involving themselves in criminal activity such as selling drugs to earn money.

This type of inequality is important because everyone needs a job to be a productive member of society. People need to work to provide for their families and feed their children. Discriminating against people based on their race and ethnicity without taking into consideration any of their skills or what

they could contribute to the workplace is wrong. It affects their families and their quality of life. This is a significant inequality to study because it shows that minorities are seeking employment and are willing to work just as hard as their white counterparts, but are held back because of institutionalized racism that they have no control over. It is important to learn how discrimination plays a role in the distribution of resources and opportunities.

Many people believe that discrimination no longer exists today since it is not as obvious as it was in the past. According to Devah Pager and Hana Shepherd, most white Americans believe that equally qualified black and white applicants have the same chance of getting a job and “ only a third believe that discrimination is an important explanation for why blacks do worse in income, housing, and jobs.” (Pager and Shepherd)

In a study conducted by Christopher Jencks and Paul E. Peterson, they found that employers view inner-city workers as “ unstable, uncooperative, dishonest, and uneducated.” They conclude that race is definitely an important part of hiring decisions, but they also take into account how race and the employer’s perception of class mix. When interviewing employers, they asked about work ethic and attitudes toward work. The employers referred to the person’s race, implying that white workers were superior to minorities in regards to their work ethic. One employer hiring for a suburban service firm said “ the Polish immigrants that I know and know of are more highly motivated than the Hispanics. The Hispanics share in some of the problems that the blacks do.” The problems she referred to were “ exposure to poverty and drugs” and “ a lack of motivation related to their environment and background.” The interviewers found that white people were thought to

have the best work ethic. While black people were consistently seen as less favorable than whites, Hispanics were mixed. Their rankings ranged from categorized with black people to in between whites and blacks. One employer said “[according to] the energy that they put into their job and trying to be as productive as possible, I would have to put the white native-born at the high end and the Hispanic in the middle and the blacks at the bottom.” Hispanics were also categorized based on their ethnicity within their “Hispanicity” and some employers said that Hispanic immigrants had superior work habits.

In the article titled “Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal,” the author conducted an experiment to test whether applicants with white-sounding names have a better chance of receiving employment than applicants with black-sounding names. They sent resumes to help-wanted ads in Chicago and Boston and tracked the amount of callbacks each applicant received. They randomly assigned white-sounding names to half of the fake resumes and black-sounding names to the other half. They also adjusted the quality of the resumes to see how credentials affect the racial gap in callbacks. They found that applicants with white-sounding names need to send about ten resumes to get a callback, while applicants with black-sounding names need to send about fifteen resumes. This means, “a white name yields as many more callbacks as an additional eight years of experience on a resume.” The only reason for this would be the name manipulation since the names are randomly assigned.

The experimenters also found that the gap widened with resume quality. White people with higher-quality resumes received an almost 30% more

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callbacks than white people with lower-quality resumes, but higher-quality resumes for black people had less of an effect. These experimenters concluded that since a race-blind selection rule would generate equal treatment of white people and black people, their results imply that race is a factor used by employers when reviewing applications, matching the legal definition of discrimination. This can be attributed to the employer's implicit bias and belief that minorities are inferior to white people, dating back to the days of slavery.

According to the “ Race at Work” article written by Devah Pager and Bruce Western, black job seekers have the same probability of getting a job as white job seekers who have just been released from prison. Black job seekers are also only two-thirds as successful as Latinos and half as successful as white job seekers when it comes to being hired for jobs. White people are often chosen in favor of black people, even for the simplest types of jobs. Through this article, it is clear that discrimination still exists and puts minorities at a disadvantage.

The discrimination minorities face in the workplace affects several aspects of their lives, but the most important might be their health. One study suggests that there is growing evidence of stress related job strain and hypertension among African-Americans who face racism in the workplace. This study found that stressful racism and race-based discrimination at work are associated with an increased systolic blood pressure and diastolic blood pressure and an increased likelihood of hypertension in African-Americans.

There have been policies put in place to reduce the discrimination minorities face in the workplace. I would suggest the Blind Application Process policy. This policy would remove the names, addresses, and race/ethnicity components of job applications. Each application would be assigned a number and employers would judge the applications based solely on the skills and credentials of the applicant. Removing the name of the applicant would remove any discrimination that is associated with black or white-sounding names. Removing the address of the applicant would not allow the employer to discriminate based on the neighborhood that the applicant lives in. Removing the race/ethnicity of the applicant would obviously reduce the likelihood of the employer discriminating against the applicant based on their race or ethnicity. When the applicant submits their application, it would automatically be assigned a random number electronically or by an employee who does not review the applications in the decision-making process. This can be enforced through Human Resources and supervisors and managers who enforce all workplace policies. It is the employee's responsibility to follow this procedure and cooperate with new policies. I think it would be important to educate employees on why this change is occurring and to show them the disadvantages minorities are put at without this policy. Educating the employees and showing them the statistics on how minorities suffer from this inequality will help them to understand what is going on and hopefully encourage them to help the people affected by it.

There are potential pitfalls to this policy. Assigning a number to each application may get confusing and could cause a loss of information if not done properly. Opponents to this policy may be the supervisors or managers

because it would be more work for them, would take some time to adjust to, and training employees to follow this procedure would also take time. If people are not educated about the inequality that exists in the workplace, they may see it as a waste of time. I do not see this policy creating new problems, but I would understand how it might be too complicated to enforce. Regardless of what kinds of policies are put in place or how they are enforced, it is clear that discrimination in the workplace occurs and must be reduced in order to stop putting minorities at a disadvantage.

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