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The Effect of the 2012 Discrimination Lawsuit on the Diversity of Casting in *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*

I. Introduction

In this project, I investigate the impact of a 2012 lawsuit on the diversity of the casting of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*, collectively. The representation of our diverse society is incredibly important in the media, and with large viewerships, I believe *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* should be displaying a representative cast that was chosen without racial discrimination. In addition, with so many impressionable viewers, it is essential that these shows set good examples of what a diverse society looks like. The main question I focus on is a causal claim: has the cast of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* increased in diversity after the 2012 lawsuit? I hypothesize that the diversity in the casts of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* increased after the 2012 class-action racial discrimination lawsuit.

To examine this causal claim, I used the dataset "bachelordata" and the variables "minority," "year," "LeadRace," and "LeadFullName." Taking subsets of the data, I looked at the proportion of minority candidates and the proportion of minority leads separately. I used two models to investigate the proportion of minority candidates and leads from before and after the lawsuit: the before-and-after design and a loop. Furthermore, using the prop.test hypothesis test on the before-and-after model, I verified whether my findings were statistically significant or not. Overall, I found that after 2012, there was an increase in both the number of minority leads and contestants. The increase in minority contestants after 2012 was statistically significant, but the increase in minority leads after 2012 was not statistically significant. I believe these findings are important because it shows that despite an unsuccessful court case,

public opinion and public pressure can be motivators in changing the way certain procedures and practices are carried out.

II. Background

In April 2012, a class-action racial discrimination lawsuit was filed against the reality television series *The Bachelor*. The broadcasting company ABC argued against this lawsuit, claiming that neither *The Bachelor* nor its sister show *The Bachelorette* discriminated against people of color. Ultimately, a federal judge dismissed the lawsuit on the grounds that the First Amendment protected the casting process. Despite its dismissal, the lawsuit created a larger conversation about casting discrimination, and it opened *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* to public criticism about its diversity. I find the question at hand incredibly important for three different reasons. I believe that diverse representation in the media is always important in providing both exposure to different perspectives and exposure to different groups of people. Especially as reality shows that are literally constructed to provide a gaze on supposedly real-life situations, *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* should be accurately representing our diverse society. Furthermore, I believe that with viewerships of about 9.6 million and 7.2 million respectively and viewerships that consist mostly of people ages 18 to 49, *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* clearly have large, impressionable audiences that may take after the actions and attitudes that are modeled in these shows. In addition, the results of this project may reflect how public opinion and public pressure may have an impact on changing the way practices and procedures are carried out within these reputable shows.

My initial theory is the casting of both shows did grow more diverse after the lawsuit. Though a federal judge ultimately dismissed the claims of the lawsuit, the producers and casting directors of the shows were ultimately put under massive pressure to choose a more diverse cast; in fact, multiple writers of the shows have also come forth and both demanded and promised more diverse casts. Therefore, I anticipate that the diversity in the casts of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* will increase after the 2012

class-action racial discrimination lawsuit. I believe the proportion of minorities will increase for both *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* collectively, as a study shows that the number of minorities in *The Bachelor* versus *The Bachelorette* is consistently parallel (Swanson 2015). Scholars studying race within *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* seem to unanimously agree that these shows are overwhelmingly white; in fact, 59% of black contestants on *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* leave within the first two weeks of each show (Fitzpatrick 2016). A 2008 study explains that *The Bachelor* is predominately white because the act of performing whiteness has become the norm behavior on the show, and when performing whiteness is the norm, people of color are inhibited from occupying a white-centric space (Dubrofsky & Hardy 2008). Still, there has yet to be a scholarly report on the effect of the lawsuit on the diversity in casting for both leads and contestants on these shows. Thus, I will be examining the causal claim of the lawsuit's impact on the proportion of minorities on *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*. I hypothesize that the lawsuit has an impact on the proportion of minorities in both shows as I believe that the public pressure that stemmed from the lawsuit may have infiltrated the norm of whiteness on *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*. But in order to ensure the legitimacy of this hypothesis, I will test this hypothesis using the prop.test command to determine whether I can reject the null hypothesis: the lawsuit has no impact on the proportion of minority contestants and leads in both shows.

III. Data and Approach

For this project, I used data from the bachelordata.csv dataset found in the bachelorREADME pdf. There are 945 rows in my revised dataset, with each row representing each contestant. The revised dataset also contains 24 variables, 2 of which I manually entered: minority and year. I must note that the information available for minority candidates was limited, so whether a contestant was coded as a minority or not was based solely on the appearance of the contestant. The concept of the consideration of minorities through visible racial markers is one that acknowledges the fluidity and instability of race and relies on how race is perceived in these predominantly white shows (Dubrofsky & Hardy 2008). The table

below displays the variables I used in this project and how each variable was coded. The independent variable is the 2012 class-action racial discrimination lawsuit and the dependent variable is the change in the cast's diversity; the variable "year" was typically used as an independent variable when coding to signify the seasons before the lawsuit (prior to and during 2012) versus after the lawsuit (after 2012), and the proportion of the variable "minority" was used to examine the change in cast's diversity.

Name of Variable	Description
minority	Coded 1 if contestant is minority, 0 if otherwise
year	Which year the contestant was on
LeadRace	The lead's race (Black, Latino, White) for the show the contestant was on
LeadFullName	The name of the lead (first and last) for the show the contestant was on

In my approach to analysis, I used two models to investigate the change in the proportion of minorities over time. I first used the before-and-after model to compare the proportion of minority contestants and minority leads before the 2012 lawsuit to the proportion of minorities after the lawsuit. The before-and-after model gave me a good sense of how many minorities there were prior to and after the 2012 lawsuit, which helped me understand the effect the lawsuit may have had on the diversity in the casting of these shows. In addition, this model was ideal in testing my null hypothesis and hypothesis through the prop.test command. Then, I used loops to examine the proportion of minority contestants and minority leads over time. By using loops, I was able to examine the proportion of minorities in these shows each year, allowing me to see the impact of the lawsuit each year after its dismissal, as well as the consistency of diversity in these shows across the years prior to the lawsuit. In addition, because each row of the dataset represented a contestant in each season, I took a subset of the data in order to analyze leads separate from contestants, which was done by creating a loop in which I viewed each lead by their full name (using the variable LeadFullName). I then assigned the race of each lead (using the variable

LeadRace) to a numeric value, coding the lead as 1 if he or she was Latino or black, and 0 if the lead was white. These values were contained in a variable named "minoritylead."

IV. Results

Ultimately, I found an increase in both minority leads and minority contestants after the 2012 lawsuit. While the prop.test command allowed me to deem my findings on minority contestants statistically significant, I was unable to reject my null hypothesis regarding the increase in minority leads. Below are four graphs I coded to visualize these results.

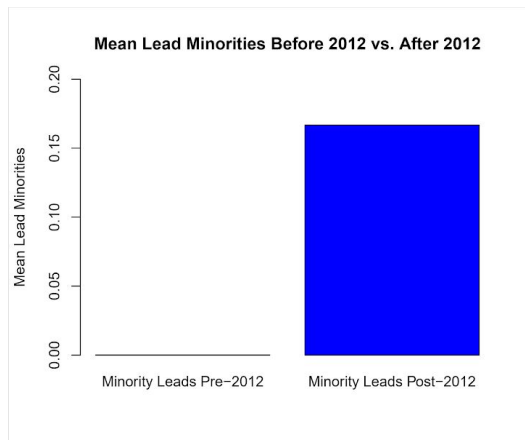Figure 1. More minority leads after 2012 □

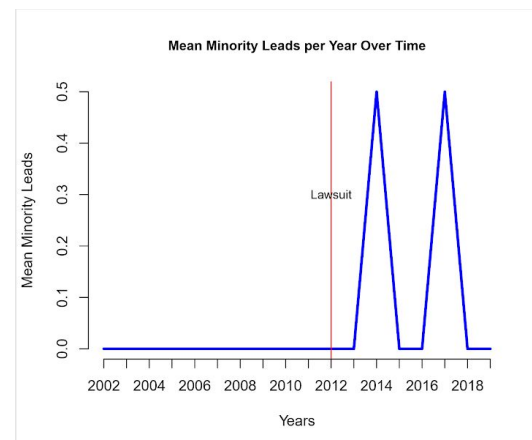Figure 2. Minority leads increase after 2012 □

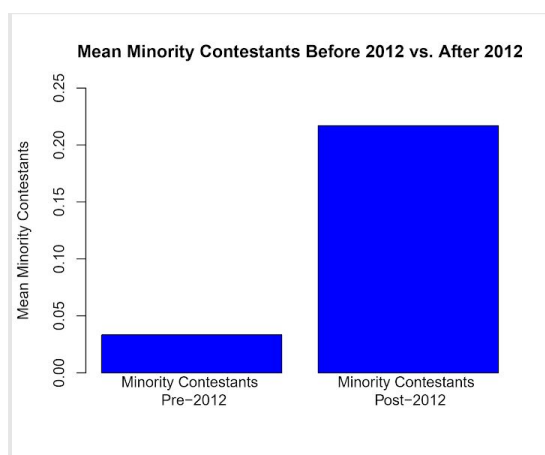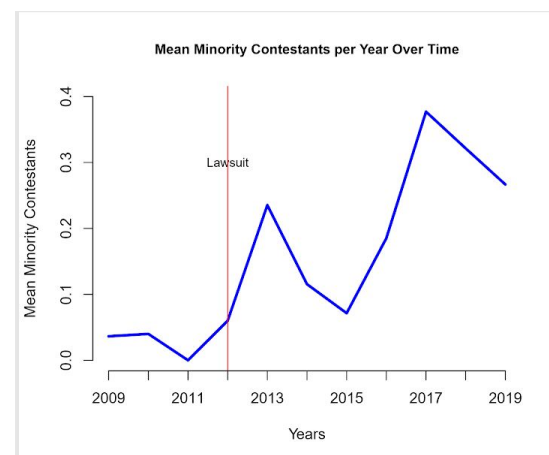Figure 3. More minority contestants after 2012 □

Figure 4. Minority contestants increase after 2012 □

Looking at Figures 1 and 2, there was a huge increase in the proportion of minority leads after 2012; in fact, prior to 2012, there are no minority leads, whereas there is a proportion of 0.167 leads after

2012 (so, of the 34 leads in this dataset, only 2 leads were minorities). To arrive at the raw numbers in

Figure 1, I took two subsets of the data: the first was a subset of the leads during and prior to 2012, and

the second was a subset of the leads after 2012. I then coded for the mean of minority leads before 2012

and the mean of minority leads after 2012, comparing the proportions to one another in the form of a bar

graph. Shown in Figure 2, there is a consistent lack of minority leads from 2002 to 2012, and a spike in

leads afterward; there was one minority lead in 2014 and another minority lead in 2017 (a proportion of

0.5 each of those years as there are typically 2 leads, one for each show, each year). To arrive at the raw

numbers in Figure 2, I found the proportion of minority leads there were for each year from 2002 to 2019,

which was done first with the data from 2002 as a model, and then as a loop to view the results of all

proportions from each year. These visualizations and raw numbers seem to show that there was an

increase in the proportion of minority leads after the 2012 lawsuit, thus supporting my theory that the

lawsuit increased the diversity of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*. Yet, the prop.test hypothesis test

shows that I cannot reject the null hypothesis; the p-value equates to 0.1984, and the 95% confidence

interval lies between -0.4400252 and 0.1066919. The large p-value and large confidence interval suggest

that I cannot reject the null hypothesis, which means that I cannot say these findings are statistically

significant. Thus, I cannot say with confidence that the lawsuit caused the increase in the proportion of

minority leads after 2012. However, I believe that this hypothesis test had some limitations to it, which is

a concept I will later discuss in part V.

Looking at Figures 3 and 4, there was a massive spike in the proportion of minority contestants

in the years after the 2012 lawsuit. Prior to and during 2012, the proportion of minorities was 0.03

whereas after 2012, the proportion of minorities was 0.2168675. I arrived at the raw numbers for Figure 3

by taking a subset of the data that consisted of contestants before and during 2012 and another subset of

the data that consisted of contestants after 2012. I then compared the proportions of minorities before

versus after the lawsuit by coding for the proportion of minority contestants before 2012 and the

proportion of minority contestants after 2012, and I coded these results to be displayed in the Figure 3 bar graph. Shown in Figure 4, there was a consistent lack of minority contestants from 2009 to 2012 (none of these years reached a minority proportion of 0.1), and a spike in leads afterward, with a peak in 2017 as the minority proportion was 0.37704918. It should be noted that the decrease in minorities in 2018 and 2019 is due to the lack of data and is not indicative to an actual decrease in the proportion of minorities during those years. I arrived at the raw numbers for Figure 4 by finding the proportion of minority contestants there were for each year from 2009 to 2019, which was done first with the data from 2009 as a model, and then as a loop to view the results of all proportions from each year. These visualizations and raw numbers seem to show that there was an increase in the proportion of minority contestants after the 2012 lawsuit, therefore supporting my theory that the lawsuit increased the diversity of contestants on *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*. Unlike the results from the leads, the prop.test hypothesis supports my theory on the increase of contestants; the p-value equates to 2.2e-16, and the 95% confidence interval fell between -0.2528904 -0.1580061. With a small p-value and confidence interval, I can reject the null hypothesis and interpret my findings for contestants as statistically significant, and I can thus say that the lawsuit may have had some impact on the increase in the proportion of minorities.

V. Conclusion

In searching for the answer to my question of whether the cast of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* increased after the 2012 class-action racial discrimination lawsuit, I found that after 2012, there was an increase in both the number of minority leads and contestants. Whereas there were no minority leads before 2012, there were two minority leads after 2012, and whereas the proportion of minority contestants each year never reached 0.1 prior to 2012, the proportion of minority contestants rose significantly after 2012, hitting its peak of nearly a mean of 0.4 minorities in 2017. After using a prop.test hypothesis test on the before-and-after model, I found that the increase in minority contestants after 2012 was statistically significant, showing that I can be confident to say that the lawsuit had an impact on the

diversity for casting contestants. However, I also found that the increase in minority leads after 2012 was not statistically significant, though this is most likely because of the small sample size of 34 leads that could be used. Furthermore, because leads are chosen through a cyclical process in which the lead has to have been a contestant in one of the past seasons, and past seasons are accepted to be overwhelmingly white, there is already a decreased chance of having a minority lead.

Some limitations to the dataset included the lack of up-to-date and available data; from 2002 to 2009, there was no data on the number of minority candidates for both shows. In addition, there was no data for the number of minority leads and candidates for *The Bachelor* in 2018 to 2020. Furthermore, because the lawsuit was ultimately dismissed, I cannot be certain that it was the lawsuit that caused the increase in minorities, and not some other confounder such as a producer-set quota on minorities cast. Future research may be able to look into the impact of the lawsuit on the actions of the producers or the proportion of minorities who audition for the shows in order to investigate this increase in minorities. Ultimately, these findings are incredibly important because they depict the power of public pressure; after the lawsuit's dismissal, the producers of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* were subject to a massive amount of criticism from both the public and the staff of these shows, and they were put under pressure to select a more diverse cast. Seeing that the diversity of these two shows actually did increase after the lawsuit and public pressure shows that even when formal means of resistance fail, informal means of protest such as public pressure and public criticism can be successful in changing the procedures and practices of institutions. In addition, as previously stated, representation of diversity in the media is incredibly important, and these findings suggest that the lawsuit and public pressure contributed to a positive effect on the increase of diversity in not just these two shows, but in the media in general.

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