1: Asking Social Science Questions

Empirical Methods

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Has the level of racism in the US changed over time?

Is It Really Racism?: The Origins of White Americans' Opposition to Race-Targeted Policies

Author(s): David O. Sears, Colette Van Laar, Mary Carrillo and Rick Kosterman

Source: *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Spring, 1997, Vol. 61, No. 1, Special Issue on Race (Spring, 1997), pp. 16-53

1. The old-fashioned racism of Jim Crow days focused on the theory of biological superiority of the white race, and on the physical segregation of and legalized discrimination against African Americans. It has been variously referred to as ''old-fashioned racism,'' ''redneck racism'' (McConahay 1986; McConahay and Hough 1976), ''blatant racism'' (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995), or ''classical racism'' (Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo 1996).

2. Stereotypes of blacks as lazy, unintelligent, morally depraved, violent, loud, and ostentatious have long been common in American society (Devine and Elliot 1995; Katz and Braly 1933). Some of these traits invoke the theory of black genetic inferiority (which is also at the heart of old-fashioned racism), while others are widely assumed to be more culturally based. Both have frequently been used in survey studies of racial attitudes as predictors of policy and candidate preferences (see Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Kinder and Mendelberg 1995; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Tuch and Hughes 1996).

3. Negative affect toward African Americans as a group has been measured most commonly with the National Election Studies (NES) "feeling thermometer" (Carmines and Merriman 1993; Sears 1988; Sears and Jessor 1996; Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo 1996; Tuch and Hughes 1996). This is usually treated as the simplest and most purely affective index of racial prejudice.

4. Old-fashioned racism, stereotypes, and negative affect have been familiar features of the racial landscape throughout the twentieth century. However, evidence of continuing white resistance to change in an era that has generally renounced both biological theories of racial superiority and legalized racial inequality has generated a variety of descriptions of a ''new racism.'' All share a component of negative attitudes toward African Americans; they differ in what is involved beyond that, and how they are measured. One family of concepts using very similar measurement include ''symbolic racism'' (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears and Kinder 1971), ''modern racism'' (McConahay 1986), ''subtle racism'' (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995), and ''racial resentments'' (Kinder and Sanders 1996). Other ''new racisms,'' conceptualized and measured in other ways, include ''ambivalent racism'' (Katz, Wackenhut, and Hass 1986), ''aversive racism'' (Gaertner and Dovidio 1986), and ''laissez-faire racism'' (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997).

5. Finally, group position theory (Bobo and Hutchings 1996), realistic group conflict theory (Bobo 1988), social dominance theory (Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo 1996), and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986) share the assumption that attachment to a hegemonic in-group is a key factor. According to this perspective, the underlying psychological motive is to protect a hegemonic in-group's privileged position and suppress less powerful groups that aspire to equality. The exact content of the myths or ideologies that promote that goal may be mostly opportunistic, if not epiphenomenal, but presumably normally includes attachment to the in-group.[2] Operationally, positive affect toward whites as a group has most commonly (but minimally) been indexed with an NES feeling thermometer (Jessor 1988; Sears and Jessor 1996).

Table 1. Origins of Whites' Opposition to Equal Opportunity for Blacks

	1986 NES		1992 NES	
	Beta	(*r*)	Beta	(*r*)
Racial attitudes:				
Symbolic racism	.40***	(.57)	.35***	(.49)
Black affect	.11*	(.28)	.17**	(.28)
Stereotypes	. . .		.04	(.25)
Old-fashioned racism	.06	(.21)	. . .	
White affect	. . .		.02	(.02)
Partisanship:				
Ideology	.12*	(.32)	.03	(.33)
Party identification	−.03	(.17)	.06	(.25)
Social welfare	.25***	(.41)	.15**	(.33)
Nonracial values:				
Individualism	.09*	(.27)	. . .	
Morality/sexuality	.02	(.25)	.09	(.30)
Authoritarianism	. . .		−.06	(.10)
Adjusted R^2 (%)	42.8		31.1	

SOURCES.—1986 and 1992 National Election Studies.

NOTE.—A positive entry means opposition to equal opportunity is associated with more negative racial attitudes and more conservative political attitudes and values. The full equations include age, education, gender, and region; those terms are not shown.

SPECIAL ISSUE REVIEW

Toward an understanding of structural racism: Implications for criminal justice

JULIAN M. RUCKER AND JENNIFER A. RICHESON Authors Info & Affiliations

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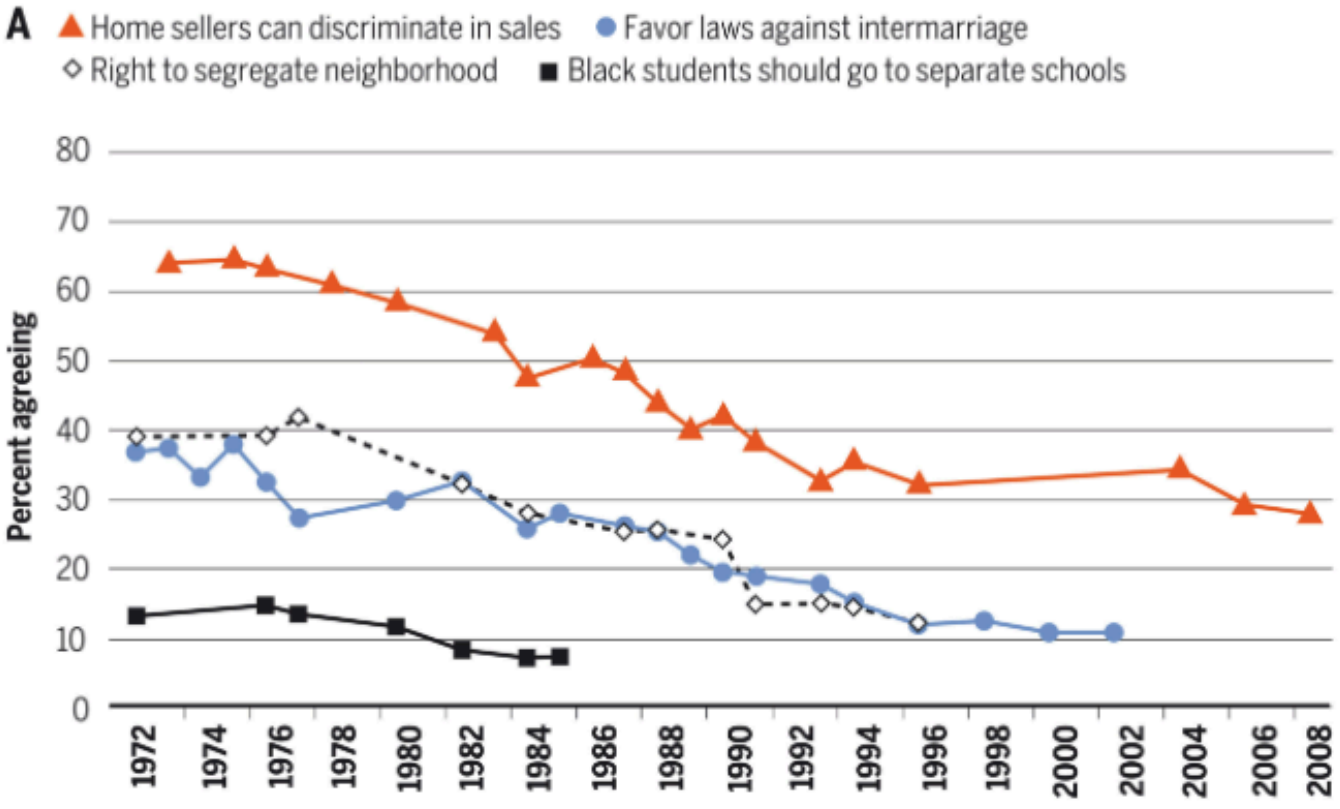
A
Home sellers can discriminate in sales
Favor laws against intermarriage
Right to segregate neighborhood
Black students should go to separate schools
Percent agreeing
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
1972
1974
1976
1978
1980
1982
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1990
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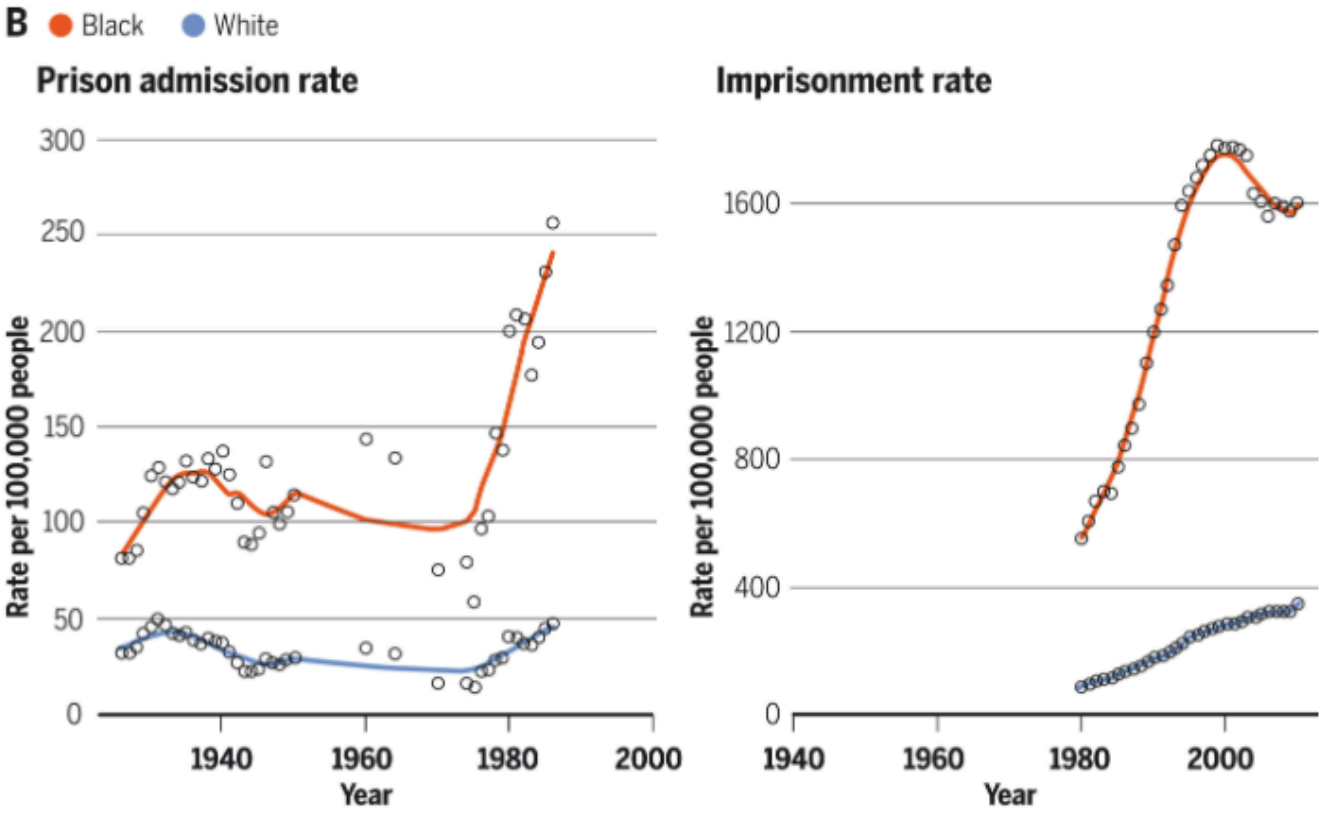

Fig. 1. Trends in self-reported racial egalitarianism and societal incarceration rates.

(**A**) Declining self-reports of racial prejudice among white Americans from 1972 to 2008. [Republished with permission of Princeton University Press, from (*55*), permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.] (**B**) Rising prison admission and imprisonment rates for white and Black Americans from 1926 to 2010. [Republished with permission of The National Academies Press, from (*56*), permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.]

PNAS

Meta-analysis of field experiments shows no change in racial discrimination in hiring over time

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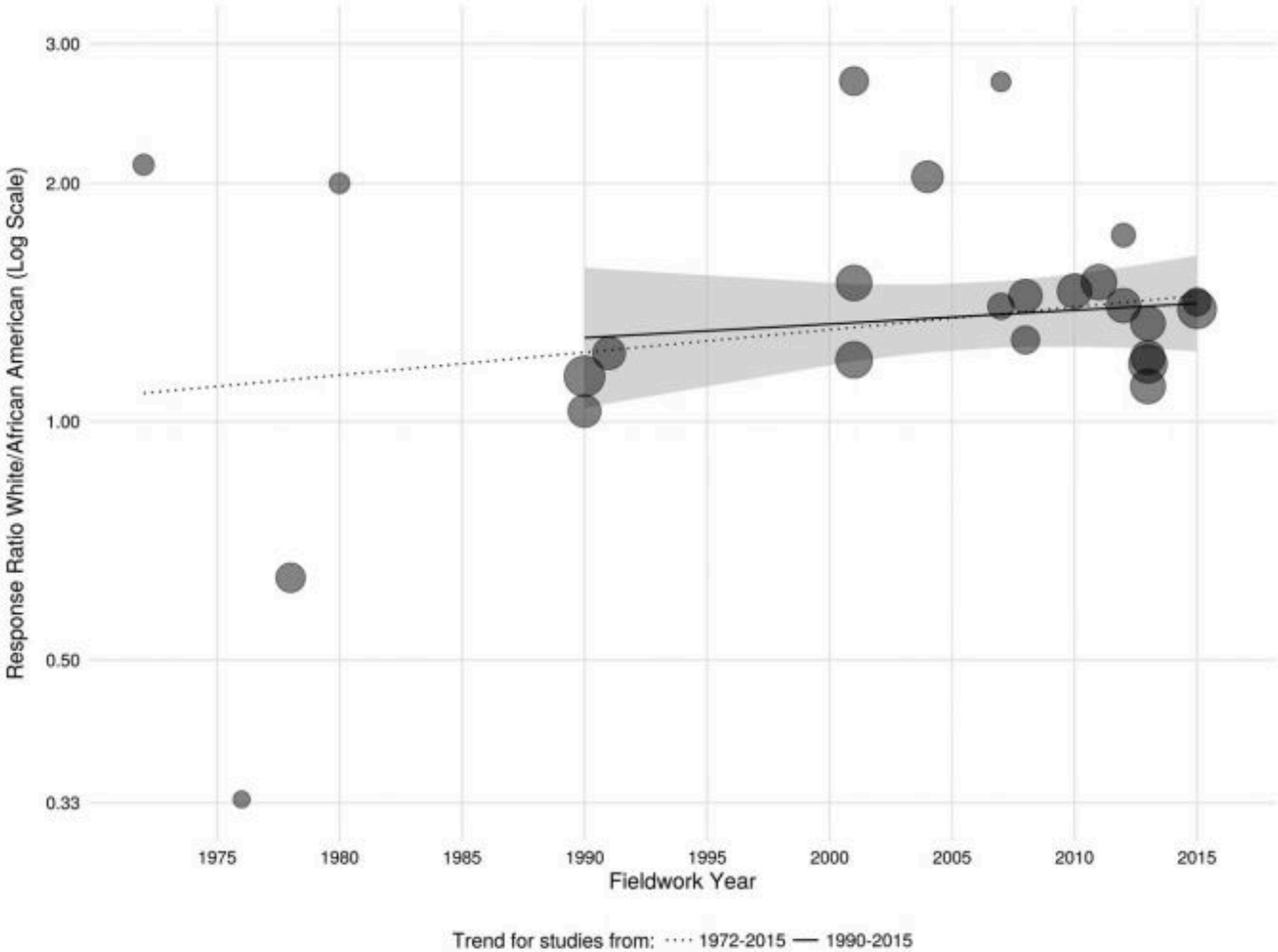

Note: Size of plotting symbols proportional to meta-regression weights. Shaded region gives 95% confidence interval.

Fig. 1. No reduction in hiring discrimination facing African Americans over time.

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

Marianne Bertrand

Sendhil Mullainathan

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resumes with African-American-sounding names. Taken at face value, these results suggest that African-Americans may face relatively lower individual incentives to invest in higher skills.[36]

C. *Applicants' Address*

An incidental feature of our experimental design is the random assignment of addresses to the resumes. This allows us to examine whether and how an applicant's residential address, all else equal, affects the likelihood of a callback. In addition, and most importantly for our purpose, we can also ask whether African-American applicants are helped relatively more by residing in more affluent neighborhoods.

We perform this analysis in Table 6. We start (columns 1, 3, and 5) by discussing the effect of neighborhood of residence across all applicants. Each of these columns reports the results of a probit regression of the callback dummy on a specific zip code characteristic and a city dummy. Standard errors are corrected for clustering of the observations at the employment-ad level. We find a positive and significant effect of neighborhood quality on the likelihood of a callback. Applicants living in Whiter (column 1), more educated (column 3), or higher-income (column 5) neighborhoods have a higher probability of receiving a callback. For example, a 10-percentage-point increase in the fraction of college-educated in zip code of residence increases the likelihood of a callback by a 0.54 percentage point (column 3).

In columns 2, 4, and 6, we further interact the zip code characteristic with a dummy variable for whether the applicant is African-American or not. Each of the probit regressions in these columns also includes an African-American dummy, a city dummy, and an interaction of the city dummy with the African-American dummy. There is no evidence that African-Americans benefit any more than Whites from living in a Whiter, more educated zip code. The estimated interactions between fraction White and fraction college educated with the African-American dummy are economically very small and statistically insignificant. We do find an economically more meaningful effect of zip code median income level on the racial gap in callback; this effect, however, is statistically insignificant.

In summary, while neighborhood quality affects callbacks, African-Americans do not benefit more than Whites from living in better neighborhoods. If ghettos and bad neighborhoods are particularly stigmatizing for African-Americans, one might have expected African-Americans to be helped more by having a "better" address. Our results do not support this hypothesis.

D. *Job and Employer Characteristics*

Table 7 studies how various job requirements

TABLE 8—CALLBACK RATE AND MOTHER'S EDUCATION BY FIRST NAME

White female			African-American female		
Name	Percent callback	Mother education	Name	Percent callback	Mother education
Emily	7.9	96.6	Aisha	2.2	77.2
Anne	8.3	93.1	Keisha	3.8	68.8
Jill	8.4	92.3	Tamika	5.5	61.5
Allison	9.5	95.7	Lakisha	5.5	55.6
Laurie	9.7	93.4	Tanisha	5.8	64.0
Sarah	9.8	97.9	Latoya	8.4	55.5
Meredith	10.2	81.8	Kenya	8.7	70.2
Carrie	13.1	80.7	Latonya	9.1	31.3
Kristen	13.1	93.4	Ebony	9.6	65.6
Average		91.7	Average		61.0
Overall		83.9	Overall		70.2
Correlation	−0.318	($p = 0.404$)	Correlation	−0.383	($p = 0.309$)

White male			African-American male		
Name	Percent callback	Mother education	Name	Percent callback	Mother education
Todd	5.9	87.7	Rasheed	3.0	77.3
Neil	6.6	85.7	Tremayne	4.3	—
Geoffrey	6.8	96.0	Kareem	4.7	67.4
Brett	6.8	93.9	Darnell	4.8	66.1
Brendan	7.7	96.7	Tyrone	5.3	64.0
Greg	7.8	88.3	Hakim	5.5	73.7
Matthew	9.0	93.1	Jamal	6.6	73.9
Jay	13.4	85.4	Leroy	9.4	53.3
Brad	15.9	90.5	Jermaine	9.6	57.5
Average		91.7	Average		66.7
Overall		83.5	Overall		68.9
Correlation	−0.0251	($p = 0.949$)	Correlation	−0.595	($p = 0.120$)

Notes: This table reports, for each first name used in the experiment, callback rate and average mother education. Mother education for a given first name is defined as the percent of babies born with that name in Massachusetts between 1970 and 1986 whose mother had at least completed a high school degree (see text for details). Within each sex/race group, first names are ranked by increasing callback rate. "Average" reports, within each race-gender group, the average mother education for all the babies born with one of the names used in the experiment. "Overall" reports, within each race-gender group, average

JOURNAL ARTICLE EDITOR'S CHOICE

Systemic Discrimination Among Large U.S. Employers*

Patrick Kline, Evan K Rose, Christopher R Walters

The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 137, Issue 4, November 2022, Pages 1963–2036, https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjac024

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Abstract

We study the results of a massive nationwide correspondence experiment sending more than 83,000 fictitious applications with randomized characteristics to geographically dispersed jobs posted by 108 of the largest U.S. employers. Distinctively Black names reduce the probability of employer contact by 2.1 percentage points relative to distinctively white names. The magnitude of this racial gap in contact rates differs substantially across firms, exhibiting a between-company standard deviation of 1.9 percentage points. Despite an insignificant average gap in contact rates between male and female applicants, we find a between-company standard deviation in gender contact gaps of 2.7 percentage points, revealing that some firms favor male applicants and others favor women. Company-specific racial contact gaps are temporally and spatially persistent, and negatively correlated with firm profitability, federal contractor status, and a measure of recruiting centralization. Discrimination exhibits little geographical dispersion, but two-digit industry explains roughly half of the cross-firm variation in both racial and gender contact gaps. Contact gaps are highly concentrated in particular companies, with firms in the top quintile of racial discrimination responsible for nearly half of lost contacts to Black applicants in the experiment. Controlling false discovery rates to the 5% level, 23 companies are found to discriminate against Black applicants. Our findings establish that discrimination against distinctively Black names is concentrated among a select set of large employers, many of which can be identified with high confidence using large-scale inference methods.

How do we make sense of all of this?

Our Goals

1. Understand and critically read how social scientists use methods

2. Have hands-on experience using key methods in structured, guided ways

3. Identify stronger and weaker methodological arguments in empirical social science, and explain what makes the difference

Course Mechanics

- 30% of the term grade comes from a take-home midterm.
- 30% of the term grade comes from a final exam.
- 10% of the term grade comes from participation.
- 30% of the term grade comes from three assignments.

Key Dates

- October 9th: First homework due.
- October 16th: Midterm.
- November 7th: Second homework due.
- November 21st: Third homework due.
- Monday, December 8th: 2 PM: Take-home final exam due.