

# Do workers discriminate against their employers? Evidence from an online labor market

Last updated on March 24, 2019

**Status**

Draft

## Pre-trial Fields

### Trial Information

#### General Information

**Title**

Do workers discriminate against their employers? Evidence from an online labor market

**RCT ID**

**Initial registration date**

Not yet registered

**Last updated**

Not yet registered

**Location(s)**

**Country**

[United States of America](#)

**Region**

[All the states](#)

#### Primary Investigator

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**Additional Trial Information**

**Status**

In development

**Start date**

2019-04-01

**End date**

2019-12-31

## Keywords

[Labor](#), [Other](#)

## Additional Keywords

[Discrimination](#), [Behavioral](#)

## JEL code(s)

[J7](#), [C9](#), [D9](#)

## Secondary IDs

## Abstract

A large body of literature in economics has demonstrated that prejudice or bias of the majority group towards members of an out-group identity – whether it be racial, religious, ethnic or gender in origin – is widespread in labor markets. Such biases often lead to discrimination. It is commonly believed that labor market discrimination is one-sided: driven by employers toward their out-group employees. In this research, we restrict attention to racial identity and seek to study possible discrimination in the reverse direction, i.e., we ask, do workers discriminate on the intensive margin (say, by shirking or under-providing effort) for an out-race employer relative to an otherwise-identical, own-race one? We design a large scale real effort experiment on Amazon's Mechanical Turk to answer our research question.

## External Link(s)

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**Partner(s)**

## Experimental Details

**Interventions****Intervention(s)****Intervention Start Date**

2019-04-15

**Intervention End Date**

2019-05-26

**Primary Outcomes****Primary Outcomes (end points)**

Each worker in this experiment will work on a simple button-pressing task, alternating `a' and `b' on the keyboard, to score 'points'. A number of points scored by each worker

(effort) on the given task in a given treatment will be the primary outcome of interest.

### **Primary Outcomes (explanation)**

Our measure of 'discrimination' will be constructed using effort choices of workers when working for the Black employer versus effort choice when working for the White employer.

## **Secondary Outcomes**

### **Secondary Outcomes (end points)**

Beliefs on demographics of the racial groups Black and White.

### **Secondary Outcomes (explanation)**

## **Experimental Design**

### **Experimental Design**

In this experiment, each worker will be randomly assigned to one of the following ten treatments and will then work on a simple button pressing task, alternating 'a' and 'b' button presses on the keyboard, to score 'points'. Workers' payment scheme and the matched employers will vary depending on the assigned treatment. Here is a list of treatments.

1. Piece Rate – 0 cents: A worker's payment will be unaffected by the number of points he/she scores in the task. No matched employer.
2. Piece Rate – 3 cents: A worker will be paid 3 cents for every 100 points he/she scores in the task. No matched employer
3. Piece Rate – 6 cents: A worker will be paid 6 cents for every 100 points he/she scores in the task. No matched employer
4. Piece Rate – 9 cents: A worker will be paid 9 cents for every 100 points he/she scores in the task. No matched employer
5. Altruism Baseline: A worker's payment will be unaffected by the number of points he/she scores in the task. Worker's matched employer will be paid 1 cent for every 100 points scored by the worker. The employer identity will be hidden.
6. Altruism Black: Earning rule will be the same as in the Altruism Baseline for both the worker and the employer. The employer's forearm and hand will reveal dark/white skin color in the video. The employer will be Black.
7. Altruism White: Earning rule will be the same as in the Altruism Baseline for both the worker and the employer. The employer's forearm and hand will reveal dark/white skin color in the video. The employer will be White.
8. Reciprocity Baseline: A worker's payment is unaffected by the number of points he scores in the task. The worker will be paid 20 cents extra as a reward before the task begins. Worker's matched employer will be paid 1 cent for every 100 points scored by the worker. The employer identity will be hidden.
9. Reciprocity Black: Earning rule will be the same as in the Reciprocity Baseline for both the worker and the employer. The employer will be Black.
10. Reciprocity White: Earning rule will be the same as in the Reciprocity Baseline for

both the worker and the employer. The employer will be White.

## **Experimental Design Details**

### **Randomization Method**

Done by Qualtrics' randomization feature as the worker joins the study.

### **Randomization Unit**

Individual

### **Was the treatment clustered?**

No

## **Experiment Characteristics**

### **Sample size: planned number of clusters**

6,000 individuals

### **Sample size: planned number of observations**

6,000 individuals

### **Sample size (or number of clusters) by treatment arms**

600 individuals per treatment

### **Minimum detectable effect size for main outcomes (accounting for sample design and clustering)**

## **Supporting Documents and Materials**

### **Documents**

## **IRB**

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS (IRBs)

**IRB Name**

Institutional Review Board, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University

**IRB Approval Date**

2019-03-25

**IRB Approval Number**

18-201

## Analysis Plan

### Analysis Plan Documents

## Post-trial Fields

### Post-trial Information

#### Study Withdrawal

This trial has not been withdrawn.

#### Intervention

**Is the intervention completed?**

No

**Is data collection complete?**

### Data Publication

#### Data Publication

**Is public data available?**

No

**Is there a restricted access data set available on request?**

## **Program Files**

**Program Files**

## **Reports and Papers**

### **Preliminary Reports**

### **Relevant Papers**