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White-collar hiring-practices: Gender-based discrimination based on gendered attributes in job advertisements

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Job Advertisements

Abstract

Most research using field experiments that investigate discrimination during early hiring

processes finds little to no discrimination against women in entry-level, mid-status white-collar

jobs. In fact, some studies show that women may actually be advantaged. However, nearly all

of this work focuses on disparate treatment occurring at the occupational/job title level. Using

data derived from comparative correspondence audits of 1,522 jobs (N=3,044 résumés) and

content coded analyses of over 1,522 job-postings, this article analyzes variations in early hiring

practices by white-collar occupational categories and then, importantly, extends analysis to

gendered attributes emphasized in job advertisements. Consistent with prior research I find no

discrimination against female applicants at the occupational category level; however, challenging

previous work, I find discrimination against female applicants based on the gendered attributes

emphasized in the job ads. Specifically, I find that employers favor male applicants in two

(finance and administrative support) of the four white-collar jobs tested when employers

emphasize the necessity of masculine attributes to succeed in these jobs. This research highlights

the necessity of creative methodologies to capture more covert forms of discrimination that may

be particularly present in white-collar settings. I conclude by discussing how this form of

discrimination potentially contributes to job-segregation processes and broader gender

inequality.