

# Examining Name Discrimination and its Effects on Ethnic and Racial Minorities Across the Globe

Iyinoluwa Babafemi<sup>1</sup> and Shanique Carmichael<sup>#</sup>

<sup>1</sup>North Point High School

<sup>#</sup>Advisor

## ABSTRACT

With the increased diversity in America, issues of discrimination and prejudice will begin to arise in different areas of life for racial and ethnic minorities. Racial and Gender discrimination are two examples of commonly discussed discrimination in the workforce and in academic settings; However along with race, name discrimination is just as prevalent but not as widely discussed and dissected as other forms of discrimination. Name discrimination is a subset of Racial discrimination and they both equally go hand in hand. This literature review examines different forms of Name discrimination, how it looks both in American society and across the globe, and how it manifests itself in diverse ways and actively disadvantages Racial and Ethnic Minorities. As there is limited research in this field, this article hopes to give deeper insight and perspective on Name discrimination, what it looks like and how detrimental it is to the lives of racial minorities.

## Introduction

America is commonly known as the “melting pot”. A place where you will come across all sorts of different ethnicities, and thousands of different names that come from diverse cultures. Diversity often brings different issues like racism and discrimination in various aspects of life for Racial minorities. The workforce, academic settings, and the rental housing market are some examples of areas where Racial and Ethnic minorities and marginalized groups may face racism and discrimination. Although there are many ways this discrimination may present itself, there is something called Name discrimination that works under racial discrimination and actively plays a part in disadvantaging Racial Minorities. Name discrimination is described as a form of bias in which someone is treated unfairly because of their name. This kind of prejudice frequently stems from cultural stereotypes that might, consciously or unconsciously, affect a person's decision-making (Constantopoulos, 2019) In a study done in 2021, Researchers from the Universities of Chicago and California Berkeley showed that employees with "distinctively Black names" are less likely to be approached for an interview than those with white names. More than 83,000 entry-level job applications were made to 108 US Fortune 500 businesses by researchers. They discovered that applicants whose names were Black had a 2.1% lower likelihood of being contacted. (Mayo, 2021) This name discrimination doesn't stop in the United States, as there have been studies that show cases of name discrimination in other parts of the world. According to the French government, 3,000 applications were submitted in 2016 for 1,500 jobs offered by 40 companies in six French cities by a consulting firm hired by the labor ministry. Employers were less likely to interview applicants with names that had a North African sound, according to the survey.

## Name Discrimination in Hiring

According to Statista, As of June 2023, there were 135.86 million full-time employees in the United States. Finding jobs and working are pivotal things in the life of an average American citizen, as it is necessary to be able to afford

the things you need to survive. Finding jobs and well-paying jobs has been increasingly becoming more difficult for many reasons. Included in these reasons are workplace and hiring discrimination. There are various kinds of ways one can be discriminated against in the hiring process: gender, religion, age, and most commonly, race. However, alongside race, there are multitudes of different cases reported by racial and ethnic minorities in the United States and across the globe of name discrimination in the hiring process. Racial/ethnic minorities in the United States are typically Hispanic/Latinos, African Americans, Asians, Native Americans, Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, and people who identify as two or more races.

Studies show that racial minorities, specifically African Americans, have higher chances of being discriminated against in the hiring process in the United States due to their name. “A job applicant with a name that sounds like it might belong to an African American - say, Lakisha Washington or Jamal Jones - can find it harder to get a job. Despite laws against discrimination, affirmative action, a degree of employer enlightenment, and the desire by some businesses to enhance profits by hiring those most qualified regardless of race, African Americans are twice as likely as whites to be unemployed, and they earn 25 percent less when they are employed.” (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2003)

To further study this pattern of prejudice towards ethnic sounding names in the hiring process, researchers Marianne Bertrand with Chicago's Graduate School of Business and Sendhil Mullainathan with MIT created fake resumes for several fictitious job seekers with popular black and white names to explore the possibility that employers would be prejudiced towards job candidates with black-sounding names. The professors then sent roughly 5,000 resumes in response to 1,300 job postings in Chicago and Boston that were listed in newspapers and on online job boards. Administrative, sales, clerical, and managerial occupations accounted for the majority of job vacancies for which the researchers' submitted resumes to. To avoid sending identical resumes to the same employer, Bertrand and Mullainathan gave the candidates' names that were common to either black men, black women, white men, or white women at random. The results were alarming: Applicants with names that sound white were 50% more likely to be contacted for job interviews than those with names that sound black (Leonard, 2003).

This sort of discrimination in the hiring process is not only prevalent in the United States, as there are many reported cases and studies done on name discrimination across the globe. A study conducted in Australia shows a pattern of name discrimination there as well. In order to conduct the study, which was published in *The Leadership Quarterly*, imitation job applications for positions posted in Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne were submitted. The study's principal investigator, Mladen Adamovic, said the finding's showed prejudice was pervasive in the Australian labor market. A team of professionals created over 12,000 identical resumes for over 4000 job applications and changed the applicant's name to represent various ethnic groups to test for prejudice in the hiring procedures. They submitted applications for jobs ranging in experience level from entry-level to senior management. The applications covered 12 different occupations, ranging from high-skilled positions requiring a university degree to medium-skilled positions requiring a qualification to low-skilled positions requiring simply prior experience. When compared to applicants with English names, those with non-English names were 57.3 percent less likely to get a favorable response for a leadership position, such as an invitation to an interview or more inquiries about their résumé. Despite the fact that their applications were nearly identical and listed the same amount of experience and education (Hanifie, 2023).

## Rental Housing Market

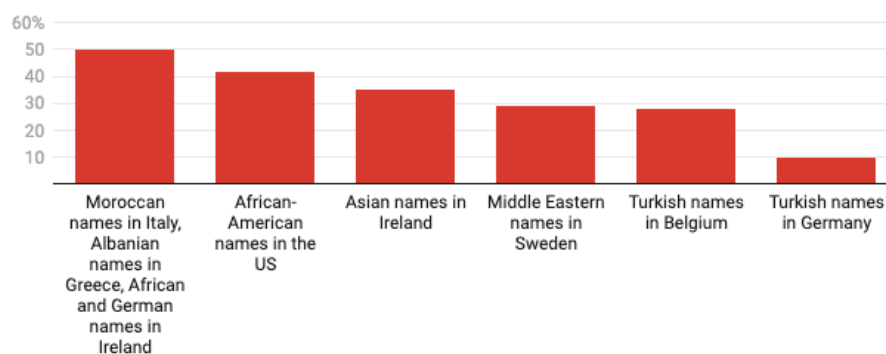
The rental housing market is another area of life in which ethnic and racial minorities may face discrimination due to their names. Studies have shown that names can activate stereotypes. In order to apply these theories and examine the impact of name-based ethnic stereotypes on housing discrimination, Carpusor and Loges (2006) sent 1,115 inquiry emails to landlords in Los Angeles County over the course of ten weeks, four of which were sent prior to the conflict with Iraq (which started in March 2003) and six of which were sent during it. Each of the transmitted messages received one of three names that denoted either Arab, African American, or White ancestry at random. The names of

African Americans and Arabs scored the poorest of all, receiving noticeably fewer positive answers than the White name. This trend persisted throughout the Iraq War throughout all rent categories, in both publicly and privately owned apartment buildings (Carpusor & Loges, 2006, p. 1).

In another study done in 2021, it was revealed that housing providers are less likely to be responsive to renters with African American or Latino sounding names across the United States. Researchers made fake renter profiles using names typically connected to White, African American, and Hispanic identities. Over 25,000 interactions between these profiles and property managers in 50 of the biggest U.S. cities were monitored. The result of this was that housing providers responded to tenants with white-sounding names 60% of the time, but just 54% of the time for tenants with black-sounding names. Additionally, 57% of Hispanic tenants responded to the survey (Butler, 2021). Discrimination against African Americans and Hispanics in the rental housing market has been documented on multiple occasions and continues to persist despite laws against racial discrimination regarding housing. Property managers are less likely to react to potential Black and Hispanic tenants when they enquire about open listings, according to study from the National Bureau of Economic research that uncovered widespread racial discrimination in American rental markets. The bot they used to conduct the research discovered that white names received 5.6 percent more responses than names with a Black sound and 2.8 percent more responses than names with a Hispanic sound. Aside from the United States, there is also recorded evidence of rental and housing market discrimination towards ethnic and racial minorities in other countries on the basis of their name. With consideration for the intersectional character of discrimination, a study sought to identify rental discrimination in the Flemish rental housing market in Belgium.

As a result, they carried out 8,245 correspondence examinations in practically all of the communities of Flanders, the region of Belgium that speaks Dutch. By taking into account the relationship and interactions between gender (male/female), ethnic origin (Moroccan/Polish), and the homogeneity of names (homogenous/mixed), they utilized an intersectional lens. The percentage of male candidates with Belgian first and last names who received an invitation was 38.8%. Invitation rates for female candidates with Belgian first and last names (36.1%) were comparable to those for male candidates with Belgian first names and Polish last names (36.9%). The lowest percentage of affirmative responses are given to candidates with Moroccan first and surname names, both male and female (respectively 26.5% and 27.4%) (Ghekiere, Martiniello, Verhaeghe, 2023) Displaying the clear discrimination towards those with foreign sounding names.

## National Differences in Discrimination Against Ethnic Names



(National differences in discrimination against ethnic names, 2021)

## Academic Settings

As a racial or ethnic minority, it is not uncommon for you to have faced some form of racial discrimination at school. “Name discrimination can begin as early as in elementary school. Children see their names ridiculed or even avoided because they are labeled as too ethnic or difficult. It is often one of the first times a child experiences racism.” (Thurmond, 2021) Many Black teenagers report encounters with racial discrimination in the classroom, including stereotype-based treatment from teachers and harsher discipline than for other students, as well as social exclusion and verbal or physical harassment from classmates (Fisher et al., 2000) Experiences of racial discrimination in school may be especially harmful to academic participation. First, schools are places where teenagers spend a large deal of their time engaging in academic, extracurricular, and social activities. Therefore, interactions between students and teachers at school affect how they perceive themselves as learners and, as a result, their motivation and engagement (Daniels, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

This discrimination also continues into further pursuits of education. A study discovered that there is a much-reduced chance of landing an academic job or being hired for a tenure-track position if your name is difficult to pronounce. From the standpoint of native English speakers, having a name that is difficult to pronounce is also linked to getting hired at an organization that produces less research, as determined by the research rankings in the Research Papers in Economics database (Ge & Wu, 2022).

## Assimilation As a Response

Assimilation can be described as "social, economic, and political integration of an ethnic minority group into mainstream society." (Keefe and Padilla, 1987: 18) There has been longstanding debates in America of whether the cultural and societal assimilation of ethnic immigrants into American society is a positive or a negative thing. Some argue against cultural assimilation, those like Valeria Torrealba, who says “Cultural assimilation, by definition, means to gravitate toward a dominant culture. While the U.S. hosts a large population of immigrants like me, we are often told to assimilate, blend in, and succumb to the American lifestyle. Practicing one’s accent and doing the most to get rid of it is a form of cultural assimilation.” (University Star, 2021) On the other hand, Supporters of cultural assimilation contend that it reduces conflict, strengthens the bonds of national identification, and enhances the social and economic prospects available to people of color (Seven, 2023).

There are different ideas of what is considered assimilating. Some people's motivation for assimilation is practical, such as obtaining some level of fluency in the language of dominance, attaining success in school or the workplace, or being acquainted with the history and culture of the nation. For some, it goes deeper and entails severing all connections to the former country, including linguistic ones. Others, however, believe that integration, a dynamic process that preserves the sense of identity, is a superior model and that assimilation is a mistake in its entirety (Lalami, 2017). However, regardless of opinion on assimilation, it is a known fact that ethnic minorities in the United States can often feel forced into assimilation by society. Without assimilating, ethnic minorities may face increased discrimination in many aspects of life. One example of this is name discrimination.

In order to try and combat discrimination based on their names, ethnic minorities may try to assimilate by changing their names. “Immigrant name changes have a long history in U.S. culture, beginning with the era of mass immigration in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The logic was straightforward: change your name and avoid discrimination’ (Deffenbacher, 2016). A large number of families had their names changed as a result of the process during the 19th century immigrant wave to the United States. This most likely occurred because a manifest with their name on it was miswritten by shipping clerks in their native country. Shipping businesses were incentivized to send individuals who would be accepted by American customs because refusal meant they would have to transport individuals back for free. Inspectors would cross-reference the manifest with arriving responses to change the name of the person, as necessary. To better their children's lives, some people are compelled to change who they are. Cultural Assimilation can lead

Minority group members to have a sense of identity loss. Due to the loss or separation from their cultural assets, minority populations may struggle with their mental health.

## Conclusion

In general, name discrimination is still a heavily ongoing issue in both American society and globally. Name discrimination may seem like a minuscule issue at first, but there are diverse and unusual ways that name discrimination may manifest itself. Name discrimination can affect ethnic and racial minorities' abilities to find jobs, housing, and cause them to have identity issues. However, these are only some of the ways name discrimination affects ethnic minorities. The spread of awareness and continued research in the field will shed more light on name discrimination and more of its effects. So far, there are laws placed by the EOCC against any form of discrimination in employment, however that does not prevent the name bias that may present itself in academic settings or in applying for housing. As there are some people that are not aware of name discrimination, more education on name discrimination and its effects can be beneficial and help to decrease the amount of ethnic and racial minorities that must experience it. Name discrimination starts exceedingly early and is often the first kind of discrimination young ethnic minorities experience, which can affect their self-perception and mental health as they get older. In conclusion, furthering research and education on name discrimination can help to prevent its effects on ethnic minorities.

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