

Revealing political partisanship a bad idea on resumes

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Displaced political aides looking for a new, nonpartisan job in the wake of the midterm power shuffle may fare better if they tone down any political references on their resumes, finds a new study from Duke University.

The study found that applicants who shared the minority partisan view of voters where a resume was sent were less likely to receive a callback from an employer than a candidate with a neutral resume.

Sharing information in line with the majority partisan view didn't give candidates an advantage, however.

"Our results showed that individuals may sometimes place themselves at a disadvantage when they include partisan cues on their resumes," said Thomas Gift, a co-author of the study who is a Ph.D. candidate in Duke's Political Science Department.

The study, which appears online in the journal [*Political Behavior*](#), tested the theory that employers hire more like-minded employees.

Researchers sent resumes to 1,200 help-wanted ads in two counties: Alameda County in the San Francisco Bay Area, described as very liberal, and Collin County, Texas, dubbed very conservative. The assessments were based on voting patterns in the 2008 presidential election.

A third of the resumes contained highly partisan cues in the liberal vein, i.e., worked for "Obama for America," while another third listed conservative political affiliations, such as experience with "Mitt Romney Campaign." The remaining third of the resumes were neutral and did not include any mention of political experience.

Gift and his co-author and wife Karen Gift, a 2012 graduate of Duke Law School, worked with a team of research assistants to identify jobs through national listings such as Monster.com and Craigslist, and through local newspapers.

They built a set of realistic resumes for entry level, college-educated job hunters. The researchers then registered Gmail accounts for each of the fictitious applicants and set up phone lines using Google Voice.

All six of the applicants had well-known male names—Daniel, John, Thomas, Robert, Michael, and Mark—to negate clear racial or gender discrimination. The resumes included similar attributes: academic records, volunteerism, generic work experience and language skills.

The researchers then tailored the resumes so the applicants appeared to be locals who would be familiar with the county and available to interview and start work immediately.

Overall, 13 percent of [job candidates](#) received callbacks.

Across the pooled sample of both districts, the authors found that job candidates who shared the majority partisan view of voters in a geographic district were statistically no more likely to receive a callback than the politically neutral candidates. However, candidates who shared the minority partisan view of voters in a geographic district were less likely to receive a callback than individuals with a neutral resume.

"Our study provides evidence that partisanship can play a role in hiring," said Karen Gift. "To our knowledge, we were the first to employ a large-scale, randomized field experiment to investigate the relationship between partisan affiliation and hiring. But there's certainly room for further research that refines our understanding of the link."

More information: Thomas Gift, Karen Gift, Department of Political Science, Duke University. "Does Politics Influence Hiring? Evidence From a Randomized Experiment." Political Behavior. September 2014. [DOI: 10.1007/s11109-014-9286-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-014-9286-0)

Provided by Duke University

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