

Racial makeup of labor markets affects who gets job leads

January 13 2016, by Amy Mccaig



Credit: ThinkStockPhotos.com

The racial composition of a labor market plays a significant role in whether workers find out about job leads – regardless of the race of the worker, according to new research from Rice University and North

Carolina State University (N.C. State).

The study found that in a job market that was 20 percent white, there was a 25 percent probability that a respondent had gotten an unsolicited job lead in the past year. But in a market that was 80 percent white, there was a 60 percent probability of a respondent having gotten such a lead.

"We wanted to understand how the racial composition of job markets affected the availability of job leads for workers," said Steve McDonald, an associate professor of sociology at N.C. State and lead author of the study published in the journal *Social Currents*. "We found that race matters and that race-related bias in recruiting can adversely impact job opportunities for workers in minority-dominated occupations."

The results held true for workers of all races, even when researchers controlled for things like gender, age and the size of each worker's social network.

The findings indicate that employers in white labor markets are more likely to use social networks and informal approaches to recruit workers.

James Elliott, an associate professor of sociology at Rice University and co-author of the study, noted that the findings also indicate that when minority workers do receive unsolicited job information, it tends to lead to employment where that type of unsolicited information then dries up.

"In other words, the flow of job leads changes based not on you as an individual but on the race of people doing your job," Elliott said.

"Presumably, this is due to a preference—conscious or subconscious—for white workers," McDonald said. "One of the things this drives home is that, if businesses take diversity seriously and want to diversify their workforce, they need to look beyond their social networks

for job candidates."

The researchers evaluated data from a survey of 642 workers from the 23 largest U.S. cities in 11 broad occupation groups, such as management, sales and the service sector. Specifically, the researchers looked at information that survey respondents provided in each city on their job and the number of unsolicited job leads they received in casual conversation over the previous year. The researchers then used census data to determine the [racial composition](#) of the [labor market](#) in each respondent's city and occupation group.

The researchers are now building on this work by examining larger samples of [workers](#), more specific occupation categories and smaller geographic areas within cities.

More information: S. McDonald et al. Race, Place, and Unsolicited Job Leads: How the Ethnoracial Structure of Local Labor Markets Shapes Employment Opportunities, *Social Currents* (2015). [DOI: 10.1177/2329496515620645](#)

Provided by Rice University

Citation: Racial makeup of labor markets affects who gets job leads (2016, January 13) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-01-racial-makeup-labor-affects-job.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.