

Study finds bias in postdoctoral hiring

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Could your name help you or keep you from getting a job? It depends. Credit: Florida International University

Could your name help you or keep you from getting a job?

When [faculty](#) from eight large research universities were given eight identical CVs and asked to rate each [applicant](#) for a hypothetical

postdoctoral [position](#) on competence, hireability and likeability, researchers found the answer.

It depends.

The postdoctoral period is a key point in the career pipeline of doctoral graduates—one "where there are almost no checks and balances," said Asia Eaton, an assistant professor of psychology and women's and gender studies at FIU, who led the study.

While applicants for [faculty positions](#) typically are interviewed and hired by a committee, postdoctoral positions are often reviewed in isolation by the faculty member hiring the position. Researchers manipulated the names of the applicants to indicate their gender, race and ethnicity. The 251 biology and physics faculty who participated in the study were told they would be helping determine which CV format was best.

Professors in both fields showed racial bias. Physicists also favored male applicants. Biologists, however, didn't show a [gender](#) preference.

Physicists rated Asian and White candidates higher on competence and hireability than they did Black and Latino applicants. They also dealt a double blow to Black and Latina women, who they rated three points lower on hireability than White and Asian men.

Biologists found Asian and White applicants more competent than Black applicants. Asian applicants received higher marks for hireability than did Black and Latino applicants.

The study was published in the journal *Sex Roles*.

More information: Asia A. Eaton et al. How Gender and Race Stereotypes Impact the Advancement of Scholars in STEM: Professors'

Biased Evaluations of Physics and Biology Post-Doctoral Candidates,
Sex Roles (2019). [DOI: 10.1007/s11199-019-01052-w](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01052-w)

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