

Etymology in Nomenclature:

Call Me By My Name

CHAPTER THREE

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INTRODUCTION

Etymology in Nomenclature is designed to explore the idea of discrimination in the workplace, specifically during the application reviewing process. As stated before, it asks the important question: “Can my name cost me my job?”. After assessing and analyzing many pieces of the literature pursuing the common question, it has become clear that this is not a new concept. However, it will be the methodology, the instrumentation and credibility of this research that will set it apart from what has been done in the past.

“What’s In A Name: A field experiment test for the existence of ethnic discrimination in the hiring process” by researcher Moa Bursell, for instance, was impactful, but unethical. She, like some of the other researchers whose work was examined in the exposition of this research, did not get consent from her participants. No matter how reliable her results are, they are simply not valid.

Face Negotiation Theory and Cross-Cultural Communication are two theoretical frameworks that aid in the understanding of the idea of discrimination in the workplace based on names. Face Negotiation Theory states that in society, we, as social human beings, believe in this thing called “Face”. Face is an image that can either represent a singular person, in the eyes of an individualist, or an entire group, in the eyes of a collectivist. Based on this theory, in this Etymology in Nomenclature study, the person looking over job applications may see a name foreign to them and will react, or negotiate face, in one of two ways: Ignoring the obvious cultural difference and viewing the application based on the person’s skill, or viewing the difference as an “Us vs Them” and rejecting the application.

Cross Cultural Communication Theory refers to the way people are able to communicate when there is dissonance in something as simple as their age, nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and even sexual expression. Essentially, it's how people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate with one another. An important thing to note about the theory is that people who have similar or identical culture tend to have less miscommunication than those from differing backgrounds, which affects comfortability. This theory is crucial to study when considering name discrimination in the workplace because of preconceptions and stereotyping, one of LaRay M. Barna's listed sources of miscommunication. This phenomenon of putting individuals in a pre-defined box based on our own image of how we think they are or should be based on a list of characteristics that we assume every member of the cultural group shares could result in bias, or in the case of this study, workplace discrimination.

Etymology in Nomenclature will pick up where these previous studies fell.

RESEARCH METHOD

For this area of research, it was thought that a mixed methods approach would be best in finding the necessary data to prove or disprove the hypotheses and answer each research question:

H_0 : There is no correlation between the ethnicity or origin of a name and the owner's ability or inability to earn or keep employment.

H_{1A} : African-based names and Middle-Eastern and Latino-based names will be at the highest rankings of names that are discriminated against.

H_{1B}: Asian and European-based names will be at the lowest rankings of names that are discriminated against.

RQ1: At what percentage do citizens in America believe there is name discrimination in the workplace?

RQ2: What categories of people (based on race, sexuality, age or sex), believe there is name discrimination in the workplace?

RQ3: What percentage of citizens in America believe they have been discriminated against during the application process based upon their name?

RQ4: Is there a specific origin of names that tend to be discriminated against the most? If so, what origin is it?

RQ5: What kinds of names (based on origin) make American employers want to hire an applicant?

Each of research questions and hypotheses can be boiled down into two main questions that should ultimately be held as the focus of this study: “Are American employers discriminatory during the application process based on names?” and “Do the American people think that American employers can be or will be discriminatory during the application process based on names?”. To answer this, the researcher decided that the study would require a focus group, which is a sign of a qualitative study, and a questionnaire, which is a sign of a quantitative study.

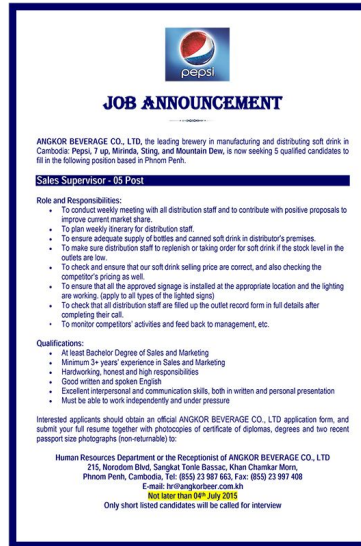
In the focus group, faux applications will be drafted and handed out to volunteers that will be chosen at random to come in to review them. The applications and resumes will feature identical skillsets and experience, but differing names. A tape recorder will be

required in case any participant wants to explain why they chose the resume they chose. A moderator will not be necessary.

To gather quantitative data to address the second main question, the researcher will hand out 100 questionnaires, or surveys, to college students ages 18-25 and adults ages 30-50. Another 100 responses will be recorded via surveymonkey.com, an online service provider that collects surveys. The purpose for collecting data both physically and electronically is to open the diversity of survey takers to make room for more diverse responses.

INSTRUMENT

To examine the dynamic of the focus groups that will be conducted, let's take a look at just the black Howard University student group. The students will come in, grab refreshments and have a chance to chat amongst each other. Music will play in the background to ensure each person is laid back and comfortable. At the hour, on the dot, the researcher will act as the authority and instruct the students to take a seat anywhere around the large oak tables. They will be briefed on the purpose of the study and a job announcement will be handed out:



The students will be instructed to take a look at the company and familiarize themselves with the criterium. A series of faux resumes will then handed out to them and they will be asked to review them. The only real substantial difference in each resume will be the names of the applicant. The list of faux names include the following:

- Paul Mitchell
- Akmal Adir
- Xinyuan Liu
- Darquavious Johnson
- Javier Ruiz.

The researcher will then ask the volunteers to choose who should receive callbacks for job interviews. The volunteers will also be asked to explain why they chose certain resumes over others, amongst other questions that will get to the root of whether or not they think people with certain-sounding names face discrimination in a process similar to the one they just simulated.

At the end of each session, the researcher will type up the recorded responses to submit into a program, like Atlas TI or NVivo, that will help code the data to find qualitative themes.

The participants involved in the questionnaire have been described as college students ages 18-25 and adults ages 30-50. College students and college-aged participants will receive a questionnaire with more subjunctive questions looking toward the future since a lot of them will not have had extensive experience working in one place, some of them maybe never having applied for a job at all. The adults will be asked questions asking them to recount their experience at their job and to rate their job satisfaction and such.

As mentioned in chapter one, there seem to be some limitations set that perhaps another researcher can test beyond one day. For example, the researcher has set the scope to solely the United States. The research will only answer if discrimination in the workplace exists in America. It, unfortunately, has also been narrowed down to the point that the discrimination in question only pertains to employers rejecting perfectly good applicants because they have what the employer has deemed a ghetto, unprofessional, culturally dissonant or unpronounceable name. The measurement may seem skewed in that sense.

SAMPLING METHOD

Deciding who will participate in this study will probably be the most difficult part in conducting it since there are so many different types of random sampling. Take probability sampling for instance, it involves the random selection of a sample. All members of the population must have the same opportunity to be selected for the sample. Under probability

sampling, one could choose: (1) simple random sampling, (2) systematic random sampling, (3) stratified random sampling, (4) cluster random sampling or (5) multistage cluster random sampling. This study will hand out questionnaires using simple random sampling, which means participants will be chosen at complete random, no patterns will be used. This way, the researcher can enter classes at random. It seems like the most convenient and quickest method to collecting the data. (Zhou, 2015, p. 112)

The focus groups require a little more precision, however. The researcher may opt to use non probability sampling, which does not involve random selection. This type of sampling includes: (1) convenience or available sampling, (2) purposive sampling, (3) quota sampling and (4) snowball sampling. The easiest form of sampling for this study would probably be the purposive sampling method. Participants are chosen for inclusion in a study because they contain a characteristic that the researcher is interested in. In focus group one, this researcher is specifically looking for black Howard University students to participate. Focus group two requires non-black, but racially diverse Howard University students. The last focus group calls for racially diverse faculty members on the campus of Howard University. Since the sample is so concentrated, it may be best to use purposive sampling. (Zhou, 2015, p. 119)

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The best place for a focus group of this sort to meet would be in room 0204 in the Cathy Hughes School of Communications on the campus of Howard University. It's quiet, secluded and contains large, round oak tables that sort of simulate a conference room during a job interview. There are also cabinets to the side where refreshments for the participants can sit.

It is imperative that around seven to twelve people participate. The researcher prefers to have twelve, just so the results are diverse. If three groups of twelve will meet on separate occasions, it is estimated that this portion of the study could take about a month to complete. That means one group will be held, for at least an hour, once a week. The final week of the month gives time to analyze the data.

The first group will feature only black students from various majors who attend Howard University. The second group will feature students from Howard University of various backgrounds and cultures, the more diverse, the better. The third group will feature both black and ethnically diverse faculty members from Howard University.

The only concern with conducting three focus groups using only people associated with Howard University is that it is in fact a historically black university. With that being said, it could be assumed that people on the campus are already used to being around ethnically diverse people, therefore may be more inclusive and thoughtful when picking resumes. This portion of the study could very well turn biased results. It is, however, a risk that the researcher is willing to take.

The questionnaires, or surveys, will be handled with a different etiquette. 100 of the surveys will be handed out in various classes in the various colleges and schools on the campus of Howard University. If it can be arranged, it would be preferred to get at least 20 surveys to students and faculty at one of the predominantly white institutions housed in Washington, D.C. just to add diversity to the data.

At the top of every physical survey that is handed out will be a small prompt to sign with a disclaimer saying that the person answering the questions was made aware of the purpose of

the study and is willing to give honest answers to any question that follows. This will not only increase the reliability of the data, but also ensures the validity by getting the appropriate consent.

Each survey will be numbered in order to keep track of how many surveys have been handed out and how many were never returned. The researcher is very aware that 70% of the 100 surveys that are physically distributed need to be returned and filled out completely in order for the data and its generalizations to be reliable, otherwise the data could be skewed.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Once all of the data has been collected from the focus groups via tape recorder, the researcher will take a week to transcribe all of the audio into written notes. The notes will be uploaded into Atlas TI or NVivo, two qualitative coding softwares, that will be used to pick out common themes to help the researcher analyze the data.

The survey and questionnaire data will be entered into Statistical Programming for Social Science (SPSS), a quantitative coding software, to generate numerical statistics for the research.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The biggest issue with the research that has been done on this particular topic in the past is that every study using similar methodologies to Etymology in Nomenclature were reliable but not valid. When a study can be duplicated and the results will remain consistent with room for a small margin of error, the research is deemed reliable. Validity looks at what the researcher said

he or she was going to do and examines if it was ever actually done. If it was, validity questions if it was done ethically. In the past, this research has not been ethical because he requires its participants to be unaware that they are participating.

This researcher plans to design a study that is both reliable and valid. A simple test and retest should be efficient in ensuring this. The researcher could opt to give the same questionnaire to another 200 people to make sure the results still stand.

There are several forms of validity: content, predictive, criterion, construct and consequential. This research will dedicate itself to work on content validity. Before finalizing the questionnaire, the researcher will ask several professors known for their outstanding research if the questions asked are truly the most important questions to ask.

CREDIBILITY AND VERIFIABILITY

To ensure that this research is both credible and verifiable, the written results of the focus group conversations will be individually and privately emailed back to each participant to make sure each person meant what was derived from what they said. No researcher is perfect, even the most in-depth analysis could be wrong. This is called a member check.

REFERENCES

- Bursell, M. (2007). What's in a name?-A field experiment test for the existence of ethnic discrimination in the hiring process.
- Zhou, S., & Sloan, W. D. (2015). *Research methods in communication*. Northport, AL: Vision Press.