AN EXPERIMENT IN HIRING DISCRIMINATION
VIA ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

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ABSTRACT

Anecdotal evidence and self-report surveys suggest that U.S. firms are using Web 2.0 and social networking sites to seek information about prospective hires. However, little is known about how the information they find online actually influences their hiring decisions. We present two controlled experiments of the impact that information posted on a popular social networking site by job applicants can have on employers' hiring behavior. In two studies (a survey experiment and a field experiment) we measure the ratio of callbacks that different job applicants receive as function of their personal traits. The experiments (a survey experiment and a field experiment) focus on sensitive traits that are either unlawful or risky for U.S. employers to enquire about during interviews, but which can be inferred from applicants' online presences. In this manuscript, we present the experimental design common to both experiments, and initial results from both experiments.