

# Gender-based Discrimination in Care Services

Findings from an online experiment

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# Introduction

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## Motivation: Gender expression

- Gender-based labor market discrimination: Gender wage gap, female LFP, SOGI discrimination - rarely considered gender expression
- Gender expression: the ways in which workers communicate their gender to family, relatives, friends, coworkers, and the external social world.
- Physical appearances, voices, posture, mannerism, behaviors, clothing, hairstyles, make-up, fashion accessories, etc.
- A continuum from very feminine, androgynous, to very masculine, but gender expression can be dynamic, fluid, and changing depending on social contexts and external environments.

# Conceptual Framework

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## Conceptual Framework

- SOGI discrimination: When SOGI signals are noisy or hidden, individuals with anti-LGBT attitudes often rely on visible cues to infer SOGI status, e.g. gay boys and men are bullied and assaulted because they appear and act in feminine manners, and masculine women are often mistakenly assumed to be lesbian.
- Given its visible nature, gender expression may underlie many cases of gender- and sex-based discrimination and victimization.
- Estimation is difficult: lack of data; salience of expression depends on social and cultural factors e.g., racialized sexual stereotypes about African American and Asian American men.  
→need intersectional approaches where both gender and racial identities are considered.

## Care Sector and Gender Norms

- Cultural expectation and gender norms influence who are seen as the 'best' workers for a given occupation
- Care sector: Care labor is consistently associated with women, domesticity, and an 'essential feminine nature', outside the 'natural' responsibility of men and masculine-gendered people.
- 80% personal care aides and home health aides are female (BLS 2022)  
→ Managers and customers prefer feminine care service workers to masculine ones? Care workers often talk about performing femininity or managing masculinity on the job.

## Racialized Sexual Stereotypes in Care Services

- Asian workers may be seen as particularly fitting due to their alleged femininity. Several developing countries relies on this trope to export care migrant labor.
- Black workers may be seen as poor fits due to their alleged hypermasculinity. Black care workers face more workplace discrimination and harassment.
- The US has growing demand for care provision but currently faces severe labor shortages in professional and personal care services. The EEOC is investigating several workplace discrimination lawsuits in nursing homes or in-home senior care setting.
- Generally difficult to establish discrimination due to multiple, overlapping identities by legal standards. But ideal setting for experiments.

# Experiment Design

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## Hiring Vignette

- Vignette study design: hypothetical labor market scenarios and workers with a potentially discriminating characteristic (sex, race, SOGI, ages, parenthood, etc.)
- Main scenario (treatment): personal care assistant (PCA) for elderly parents who live on their own. The ideal PCA is expected to have feminine characteristics such as being kind, warm, emotionally sensitive, compassionate, empathetic, and devoted to taking care of their clients.
- Unlike nurses or teachers, customers have greater unilateral power to hire or fire the PCA.
- Alternative scenario (control): group fitness instructor (GFI) for a retirement home facility. Share similar characteristics with PCA but does not have social association with femininity.

## Worker's Profile

- Worker profile contains their name, portrait, and a narrative paragraph that describes several attributes.
- Worker A: "I am 25 years old and I'm from New York. I am a certified Home Health Aide. I graduated with an associate degree from Pratt Community College. I have worked as a care worker for about 2 year(s). I am professional and reliable."
- Attributes are randomly assigned at the participant level, and there is no information about worker's identity.
- Portraits: sex (men), race (Asian, Black, or White), and gender expression (masculine or feminine).

# Worker's Portraits



## Experiment Set up

- Participants were randomly assigned to either the PCA group or the GFI group.
- In each group, participants saw the corresponding hiring scenario and the profile of four worker: three masculine men, and one feminine man randomly chosen from the three feminine portraits.
- Hiring questions: Rating of workers, Select for interview (multiple), Hourly wage offer, Parents' rating of worker, Politically-biased hiring manager's rating of workers (conservative and liberal)
- Validation questions: Participants' best guess of workers' race, gender expression, SOGI, and rating level of physical attractiveness, caring, patience, and friendliness
- Demographics questionnaire

## Data Overview

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## Recruitment and Data collection

- Recruited through Prolific, gender-balanced sample
- Data was collected on July 27-28, 2023. Average survey completion time was 13 minutes. Final sample of 1,581 participants.
- Age ranged from 18 to 94 (median age 38). A majority of participants identified as White, cisgender, and heterosexual, and highly educated (half had at least a Bachelor's degree) .
- Compare with US average: younger, more white, more likely to identify as LGBT, less likely to have partner but more likely to have children, more educated, more likely to be currently working, more likely to live in small town and rural areas, less religious, and more liberal leaning.

# Do Participants see what we see?

Worker	Racial Identity Note [1]	Gender Expression Note [2]	Sexual Orientation Note [3]	Gender Identity Note [4]
Asian, feminine	88% Asian, 9% White	3.11 <sup>†</sup>	2.84	2.33 <sup>†</sup>
Black, feminine	88% Black, 10% Other Race/Not Sure	3.45	2.62 <sup>†</sup>	2.00
White, feminine	90% White, 8% Other Race/Not Sure	3.42	2.75	2.03
Asian, masculine	91% Asian, 5% White	4.10*	4.18* <sup>†</sup>	1.33*
Black, masculine	17.5% Black, 69% Other Race/Not Sure	4.44* <sup>†</sup>	4.20* <sup>†</sup>	1.31*
White, masculine	95% White, 4.5% Other Race/Not Sure	4.09*	4.07*	1.35*

\* indicates difference from feminine worker of the same race and † indicates difference from white worker of the same gender expression, at 95% confidence level.

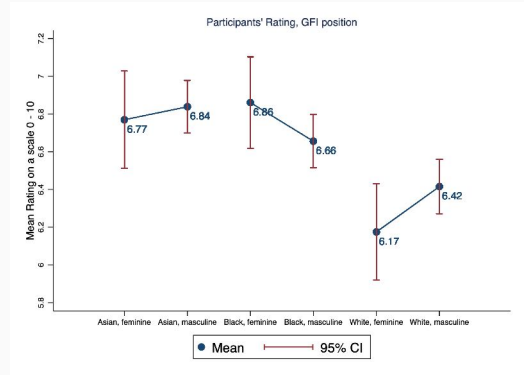
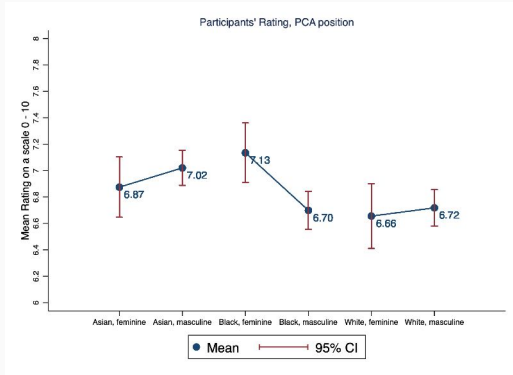
<sup>1</sup> Participants were given four options: White/ Caucasian, Black/African American, Asian, and Other Races/Not sure. We show the two most popular choices here.

<sup>2</sup> 1 = Very feminine, 3 = Androgynous, 5 = Very masculine

<sup>3</sup> 1 = Homosexual/Gay, 3 = Bisexual, 5 = Heterosexual/ Straight

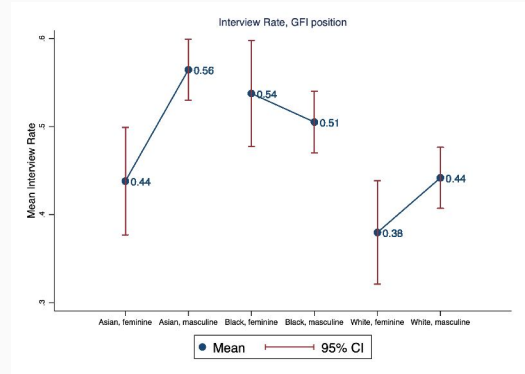
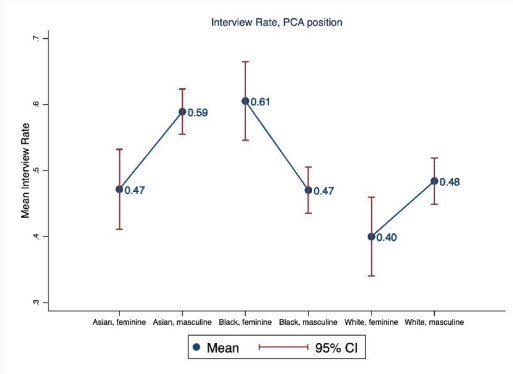
<sup>4</sup> 1 = Cisgender, 5 = Transgender

# Key Outcome: Rating of workers

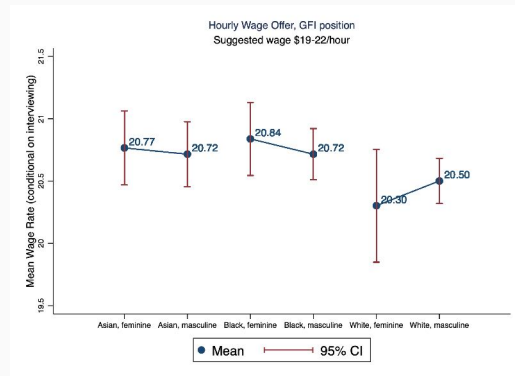
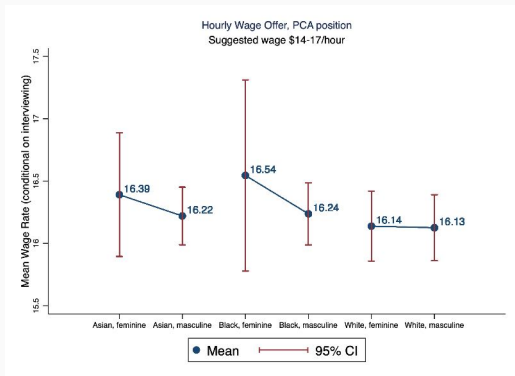




# Key Outcome: Interview Rates



# Key Outcome: Hourly wage offer



## Regression Result

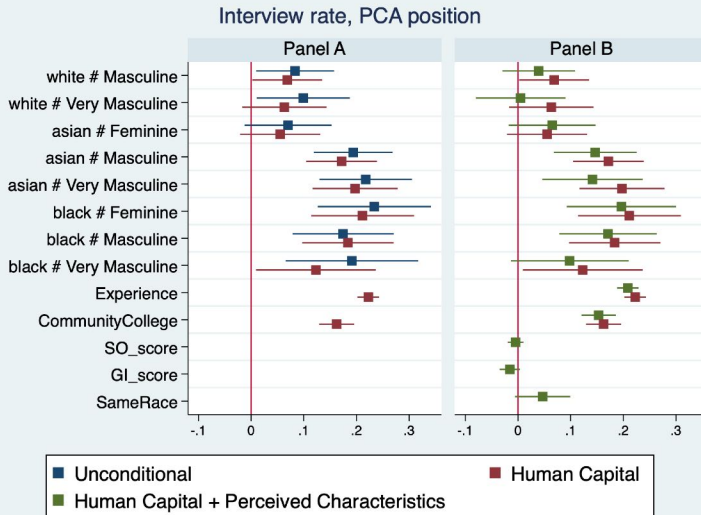
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# Regression Model

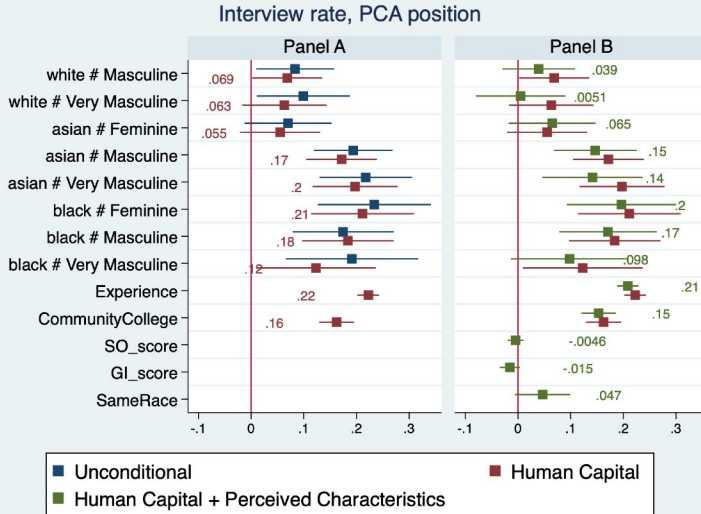
$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Race} + \beta_2 \text{GenderExp} + \beta_3 \text{Race} * \text{GenderExp} + \gamma X_i + \theta Z_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

- $Y_{ij}$ : Outcome of interest, *Race* and *GenderExp* are as perceived by participants
- $X_i$ : Vector of worker-level controls (age, experience, education, qualification, hometown)
- $Z_{ij}$ : Vector of worker-participant controls (SOGI score, physical attractiveness score, level of caring, patience and friendliness, and *SameRace* dummy)
- Hypotheses: Asian feminine > Asian masculine > White feminine > White masculine > Black feminine > Black masculine for PCA position

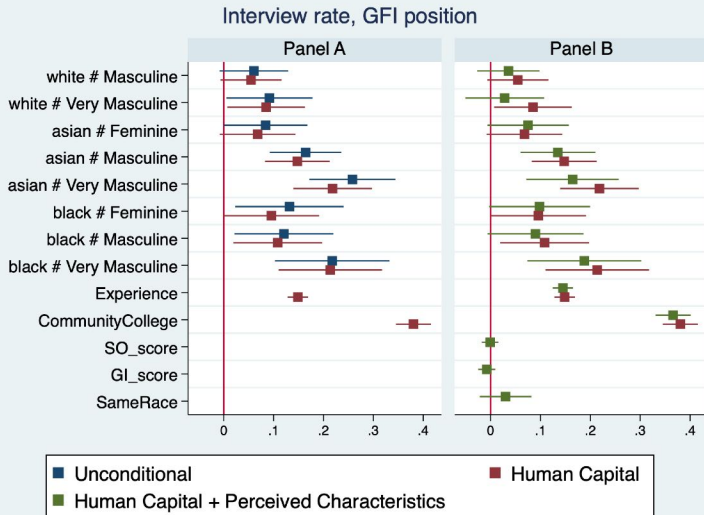
# Results: Interview Rate, PCA



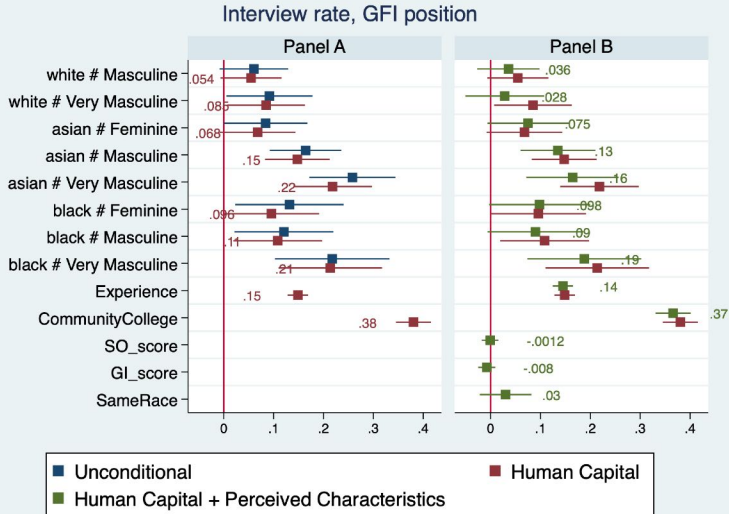
# Results: Interview Rate, PCA



# Results: Interview Rate, GFI



# Results: Interview Rate, GFI





## Taking Stock

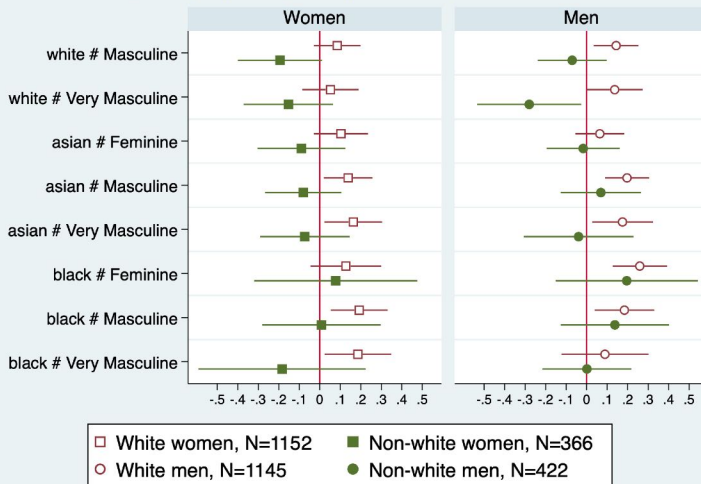
- PCA position: Asian masculine workers and Black feminine workers receive 15-20 p.p. higher interview rates than the White feminine worker (baseline rate = 40%).
- GFI position: Asian masculine workers and Black masculine workers receive 10-15 p.p. higher interview rates than the White feminine workers (baseline rate = 38%).
- Same order of magnitude as the effect of having one additional year of experience or having a community college degree.
- Surprising result, possibly linked to how (majority White) participants conceptualize “a good fit” for these entry-level, low-wage, low-education positions.

## Additional Analyses

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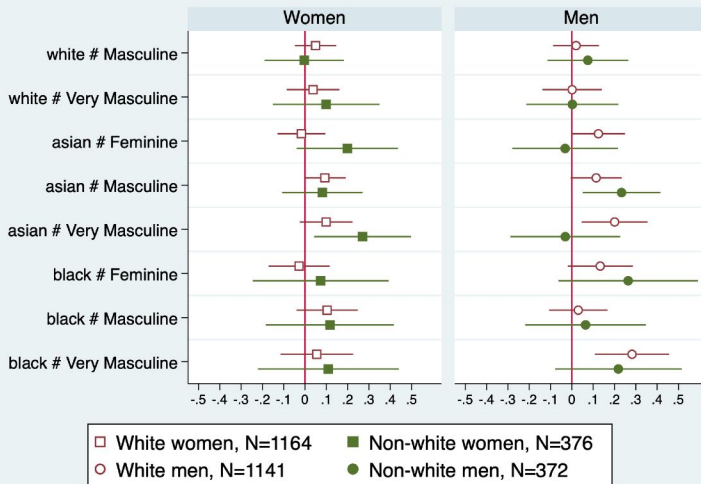
# Heterogenous preferences: Participants' identity

Heterogeneity in participants' preference, PCA interview rate



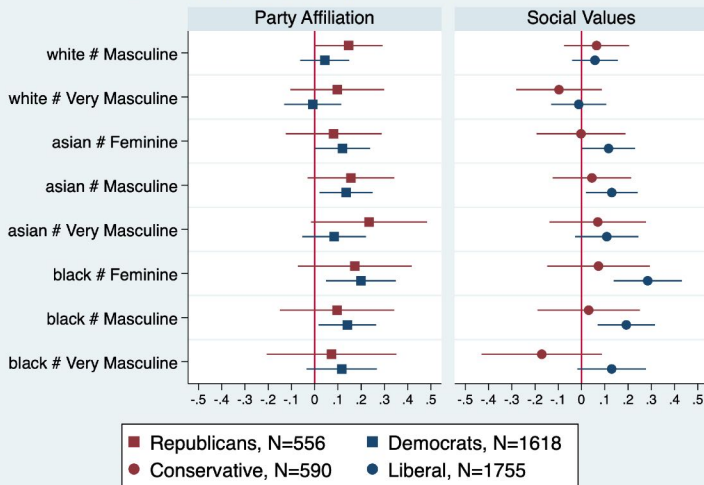
# Heterogenous preferences: Participants' identity

Heterogeneity in participants' preference, GFI interview rate



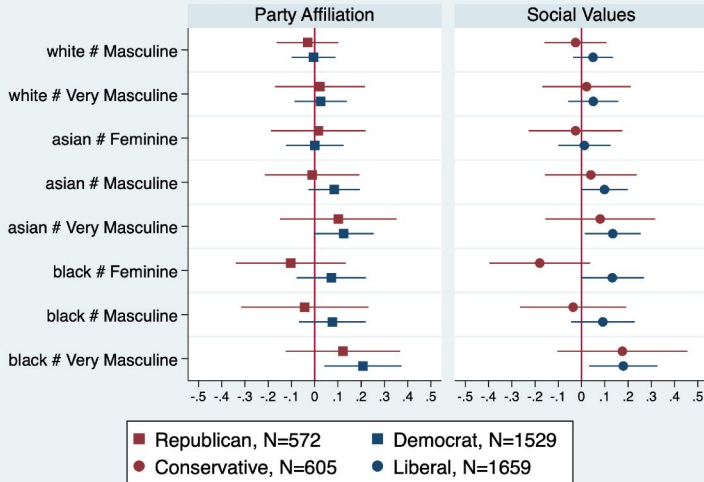
# Heterogenous preferences: Sociopolitical Values

Heterogeneity in participants' preference, PCA interview rate



# Heterogenous preferences: Sociopolitical Values

Heterogeneity in participants' preference, GFI interview rate



## Political Differences and Biases

- Liberal/ progressive values are associated not only with equity and inclusivity, but also with diversity and affirmative actions. Maybe they engage in affirmative hiring practices targeting racial minorities
- Null findings for conservative could be lower bound due to social desirability bias
- Participants who guessed that the study was about discrimination might conceal their true preference and provided answers that were more socially and politically acceptable.
- Participants who was aware of the study's objectives would go out of their way to provide the answers they thought the researchers were looking for (i.e. Experimenter's Demand)

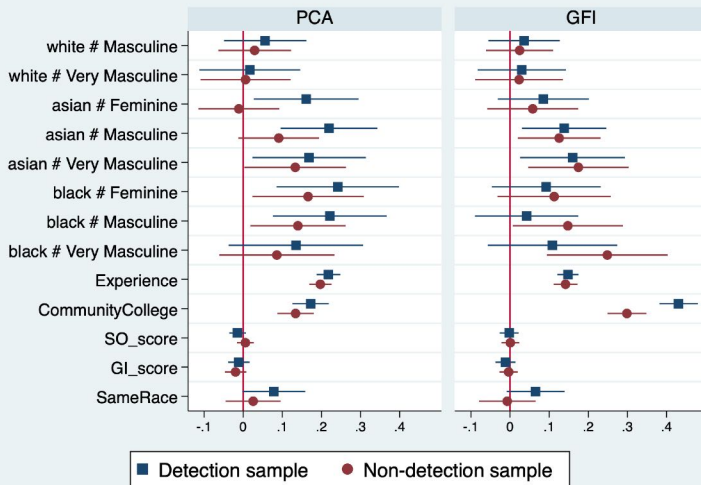
## What do you think the study's objective was?

Participants' text-entry response	N=1,581
Gender, Sex, Masculinity, Femininity	12.3%
Race, Racial, Racism, Ethnicity	12.3%
Perception, Appearance, Look, Image	21.3%
Have at least one of the above patterns	49.8%
Have all three of the above patterns	3.4%
PCA detection sample	N=389
PCA non-detection sample	N=402
GFI detection sample	N=398
GFI non-detection sample	N=392



# Detection Risk Assessment

Effect of Detection Risks on Interview Rate



## Conclusion

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## In Closing

- Even after controlling for workers' characteristics including human capitals, participants still prefer Asian and Black workers over White workers. For the PCA position, participants give Asian masculine workers and Black feminine workers 15-20 percentage point higher interview rates than the White feminine worker.
- Future directions: replication, scale up to field experiments (partner with senior home facilities and their hiring managers), incentivized rating, including more occupation and hiring scenarios, using video footages to represent gender expression.
- Important to document prevalence of discrimination and how they continue to affect labor market outcomes, especially for historically marginalized groups.

# Thank you!

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