

Unemployment Stigma and the Selection Process

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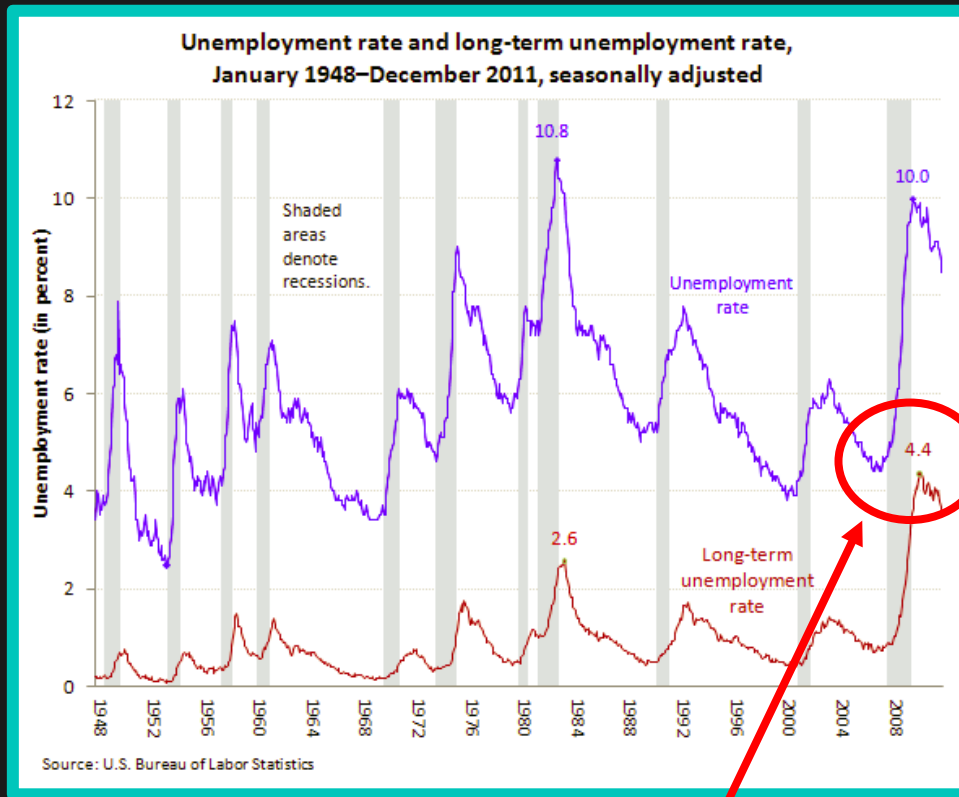
Unemployment Statistics

Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012)

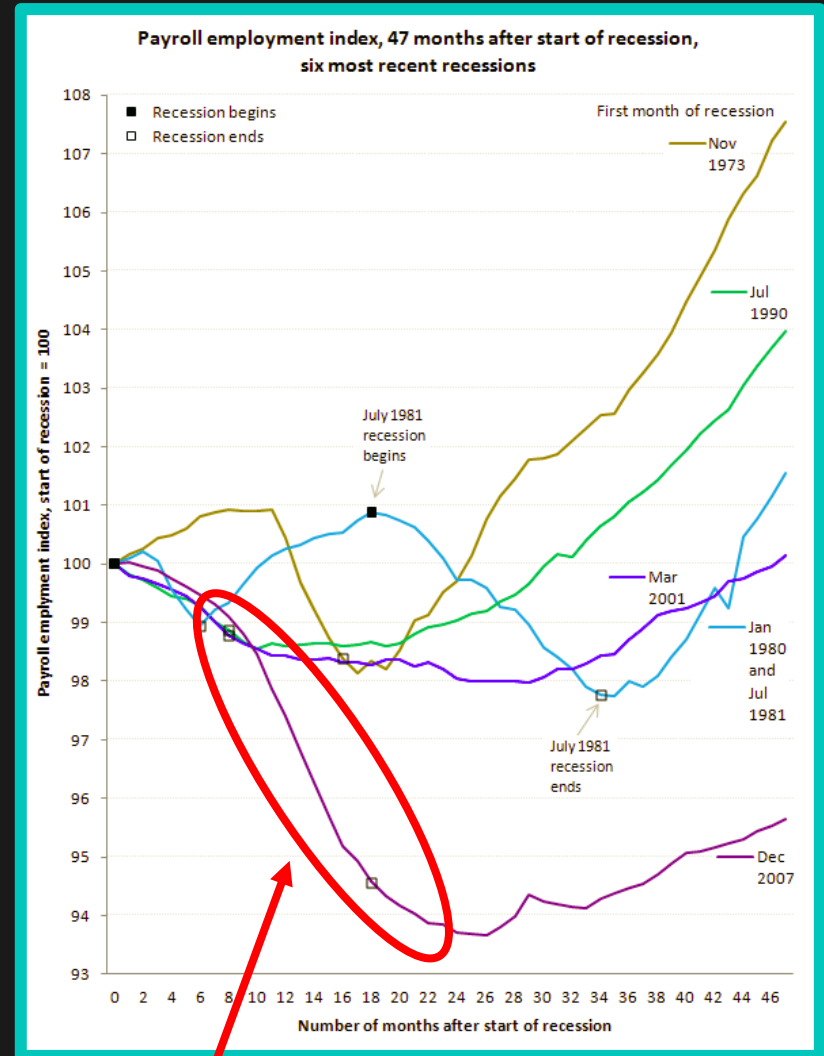
- One of the most highly recognized indicators of a recession is an increase in unemployment rates
- In the most recent recession (2007-2009):
 - The unemployment rate decline was more rapid than it had been in any other recession in recent decades
 - The U.S. had a higher proportion of long-term unemployed people (unemployment > 27 weeks) than ever before – spiked at 4.4% in 2008

Payroll Employment Index (6 most recent recessions)

Unemployment Rate & Long-Term Unemployment Rate



Spike in long-term unemployment



Sharp Decline

Literature Review

- Thus far, most of the literature surrounding unemployment has focused on the **negative psychological effects** of being unemployed and how the unemployed manage their stigma (Ho, Shih, Walters, & Pittinsky, 2011; Letkemann, 2002).
- As length of unemployment increases (Blau, Petrucci, & McClendon, 2013):
 - Less satisfied with life
 - Less comfortable in networking situations
 - Lower reemployment expectations
 - Financial Strain
 - Depression

Unemployment Stigma at “Work”

- Oberholzer-Gee (2008) found that when reviewing administrative assistant applications, few firms were willing to even interview a non-employed applicant, had they been jobless for a long period of time (more than 30 months).
- Survey respondents blamed unemployment on the individuals themselves and believed **the unemployed could get a job if they really wanted to** (Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003).
 - This perception implies that being unemployed is a result of one's lacking dispositional attributes (**low ability and motivation**), as opposed to being a result of one's circumstances (being laid-off, family issues)

Help Wanted Ads

(Bassett, 2011)

- Language in help-wanted ads requiring applicants to be “currently employed” in order to be considered
- According to Bassett, even though many of the companies deny specifying this preference, their respective staffing agencies confirm their clients only want employed applicants.
- As described by one-such company’s human resources representative, excluding the unemployed from advertisements helps to minimize the volume of unqualified applicants, as **many people who don’t have jobs do not have necessary skills**

The Proposed Study

- The current study seeks to expand our understanding of discrimination against the unemployed by adding the variables of **age, gender, and length of unemployment** into hirers' evaluation of applicants



Hypotheses

- **H1: The 45-year old unemployed applicants will be selected for hiring less than the 25-year old unemployed applicants.**
- In their meta-analysis, Bal and colleagues found that across studies of the older workforce, age has a negative impact on being selected, advancing in an organization, and quality of performance evaluations. Across these negative consequences, the strongest correlation existed for older workers' ability to get selected (Bal, Reiss, Rudolph, & Baltes, 2011).
- Karen and Sherman (2012) suggest that the negative stereotypes associated with older age (being less productive, less creative, less flexible, less ambitious, harder to train, etc.), coupled with the stereotypes associated with being unemployed (unskilled, low motivation, etc.) would create more discrimination for these "doubly-stigmatized" individuals

Hypotheses (Cont.)

- **H2: Unemployed male applicants will be less likely to get hired than unemployed female applicants.**
- Correlational studies have shown that men tend to view unemployment as a defeat, while women see it as more of an opportunity (Forret, Sullivan, & Mainiero, 2010; Kulik, 2000). Kulik argues that this trend might stem from traditional gender roles and expectations in society. Specifically, joblessness might not be as traumatizing to women as it is to men because of men's societal expectation to be primary breadwinners

Hypotheses (Cont.)

- H3: Applicants with longer bouts of unemployment will be less likely to be hired than applicants with shorter bouts of unemployment, such that:
 - Unemployed for 18 months < unemployed for 7 months < unemployed for 3 months < currently employed.
- As previously mentioned, length of unemployment can also affect an individual's probability of being hired, such that longer stints of joblessness decrease reemployment opportunities (Blau, Petrucci, & McClendon, 2013; Oberholzer-Gee, 2008).

Proposed Methods

Participants and Design

- 500 participants
- Between-Subjects design
- 16 conditions
- Each condition will begin with a different vignette describing the qualifications of an applicant applying for a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) position. Participants will be asked (as the hiring manager) to assess candidates for hire.
- The 16 vignettes will describe applicants who are otherwise equally qualified, but will vary in:
 - **gender** (male/female)
 - **age** (25/45 years old)
 - **employment status** (currently employed, unemployed for 3 months, unemployed for 7 months, unemployed for 1.5 years)

Vignette Examples

7 Mo. Unemployed	Female	25
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Sarah is 25 years old and is a certified public accountant with a Bachelor's degree in finance. She has been unemployed for the last 7 months, but has four years' experience working for an international financial group.

7 Mo. Unemployed	Male	25
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William is 25 years old and is a certified public accountant with a Bachelor's degree in finance. He has been unemployed for the last 7 months, but has four years' experience working for an international financial group.

- Currently Employed
- Unemployed 3 months
- Unemployed 7 months
- Unemployed 18 months



7 Mo. Unemployed	Female	45
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Laura is 45 years old and is a certified public accountant with a Bachelor's degree in finance. She has been unemployed for the last 7 months, but has four years' experience working for an international financial group.

7 Mo. Unemployed	Male	45
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David is 45 years old and is a certified public accountant with a Bachelor's degree in finance. He has been unemployed for the last 7 months, but has four years' experience working for an international financial group.

Proposed Methods

Measures

- Hireability Scale (Pearn, Machus, & Culbertson, 2012)
 - α 's = .91 - .96
 - Example items: "I could see this person being a hard worker", "This person would be a good employee"
 - → "I would hire this person for the position"
- Manipulation Check
 - "What is the employment status of the applicant you reviewed?"
 - "Is the applicant you reviewed male or female?"
 - "How old is the applicant you reviewed?"

Proposed Methods

Measures (Cont.)

- Assumptions Questionnaire
 - "45-year olds tend to remain set in their ways"
 - "People unemployed for 18 months have skills that are out of date"
 - "If someone's been unemployed for 3 months, it's probably the fault of the economy"
- Big 5 Personality Inventory (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008)
- Demographics, including:
 - Participants' personal employment/unemployment history
 - Participants' family & friends' employment/unemployment history

Planned Analyses

- Data will be analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to compare hireability score across applicant conditions which will allow an examination of main effects and interactions between employment status, gender, and age.
- Exploratory Analysis:
 - Demographic items
 - Personality
 - Assumptions



Expected Results

- Unemployed 25 year-olds more hireable than unemployed 45 year-olds
- Unemployed women more hireable than unemployed men
- Currently employed > unemployed 3 months > unemployed 7 months > unemployed 18 months

