

# Discrimination against Workers with Visible Tattoos: Experimental Evidence from Germany <sup>\*</sup>

Daviti Jibuti<sup>†</sup>

27th October 2018

## Abstract

We use a correspondence testing approach to study discrimination against applicants with visible tattoos in the German labor market. The method has been widely employed in discrimination literature; however, the majority of papers examine objects of discrimination that are exogenously given (gender, race, ethnicity, etc.). The design of our experiment allows us to study the extent of discrimination against choice-based characteristics. We send fictitious applications to online job postings in the banking sector. Otherwise identical applications differ only in the picture attached: in the treatment group the applicants have a visible tattoo. The extent of discrimination is measured by the difference in callback rates. We find that candidates without visible tattoos have, on average, a 13 percentage point higher callback rate, or an increase in the callback rate of 54%. Following Akerlof and Kranton (2000), our results once more highlight the centrality of identity.

**JEL codes:** C93, J71

**Keywords:** Labor market discrimination; field experiment; visible tattoo

---

<sup>\*</sup>We are grateful to Randall Filer and Andreas Menzel for their continuous support and guidance. We would like to thank Michal Bauer, Patrick Gaule, Fabio Michelucci, Peter Katuscak, Nikolas Mittag, Gerard Roland and conference/seminar participants at the University of Chicago, University of East Anglia, the University of Rennes 1 and Masaryk University for their valuable comments and helpful suggestions. Bilal Zafar, Christian Scherer and the whole team of richtiggutbewerben.de provided qualitative applications that guaranteed a high response rate. All remaining errors are mine.

<sup>†</sup>CERGE-EI, a joint workplace of Charles University and the Economics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Politických Věznu 7, 111 21 Prague, Czech Republic. Email: Daviti.Jibuti@cerge-ei.cz