Don't Mind the Gap:

Reframing Résumés Facilitates Mothers' Work Re-Entry

Ariella Kristal, Harvard University

Leonie Nicks, The Behavioural Insights Team

Jamie L. Gloor, University of St.Gallen & Exeter University

Oliver Hauser, Exeter University

Becoming a mother and taking care-related leaves from work contribute to economic gender inequality: Employers' gender role stereotypes ascribe mothers less qualification and ambition (i.e., agency), which are reinforced by employment gaps in their résumé. We integrate the judgment and decision-making literature to redesign mothers' résumés in a way that reduces mothers' barriers to work re-entry. More specifically, integrating signal detection theory, we theorize that by replacing employment dates with the number of years the applicant worked in each job, applicants can better convey their relevant professional abilities and ambition to employers (i.e., signals) without disclosing these distracting employment gaps (i.e., noise). In a large- scale randomized field experiment (N = 9,022), results showed that mothers with this redesigned resume' received more callbacks than those whose résumés showed employment dates. In an online experiment (N = 667), we replicated and extended these findings to show explicit evidence of our theorized mechanism: applicant agency. By integrating these literatures, we proposed and tested a cost-free, low-effort intervention to reduce inequality by reducing mothers' résumé gap- related agency penalties and facilitating their return to work.

Kristal, A., Nicks, L., Gloor, J. L., & Hauser, O. (2021). Don't mind the gap: Reframing résumés facilitates mothers' work re-entry. *Academy of Management Best Paper Proceedings*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2021.278>