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# Occupational Advancement of Workers of Color: Patterns and Barriers

## Findings from the Career Trajectories and Occupational Transitions Study (CTOT) and the Employment Processes as Barriers in the Low-Wage Market Literature Review (EPB)

Deena Schwartz, Senior Equity Associate; Andrew Clarkwest, PhD, Principal Associate/Scientist

### Questions

- Are some mid-level occupations better launchpads for career advancement than others?
- Among peers entering the same mid-level occupation, how does wage growth vary by race and gender?
- What accounts for advancement disparities?
- What could be done to address inequalities in advancement?

### Phases of Work

Develop novel measures of how workers advance in their careers for up to 10 years after entering a “mid-level” job

**Mid-level** = Occupation requiring some preparation beyond a HS degree, but not a 4-year college degree

**Data Sources:** Panel Study of Income Dynamics; National Longitudinal Study of Youth-97 combined to create large sample of worker-specific trajectories (N = 25,038)

### Review research literature on bias in employment processes

- **Summarized research** to date on racial bias in the lower-wage labor market
- Focused on sources of bias across the employment process



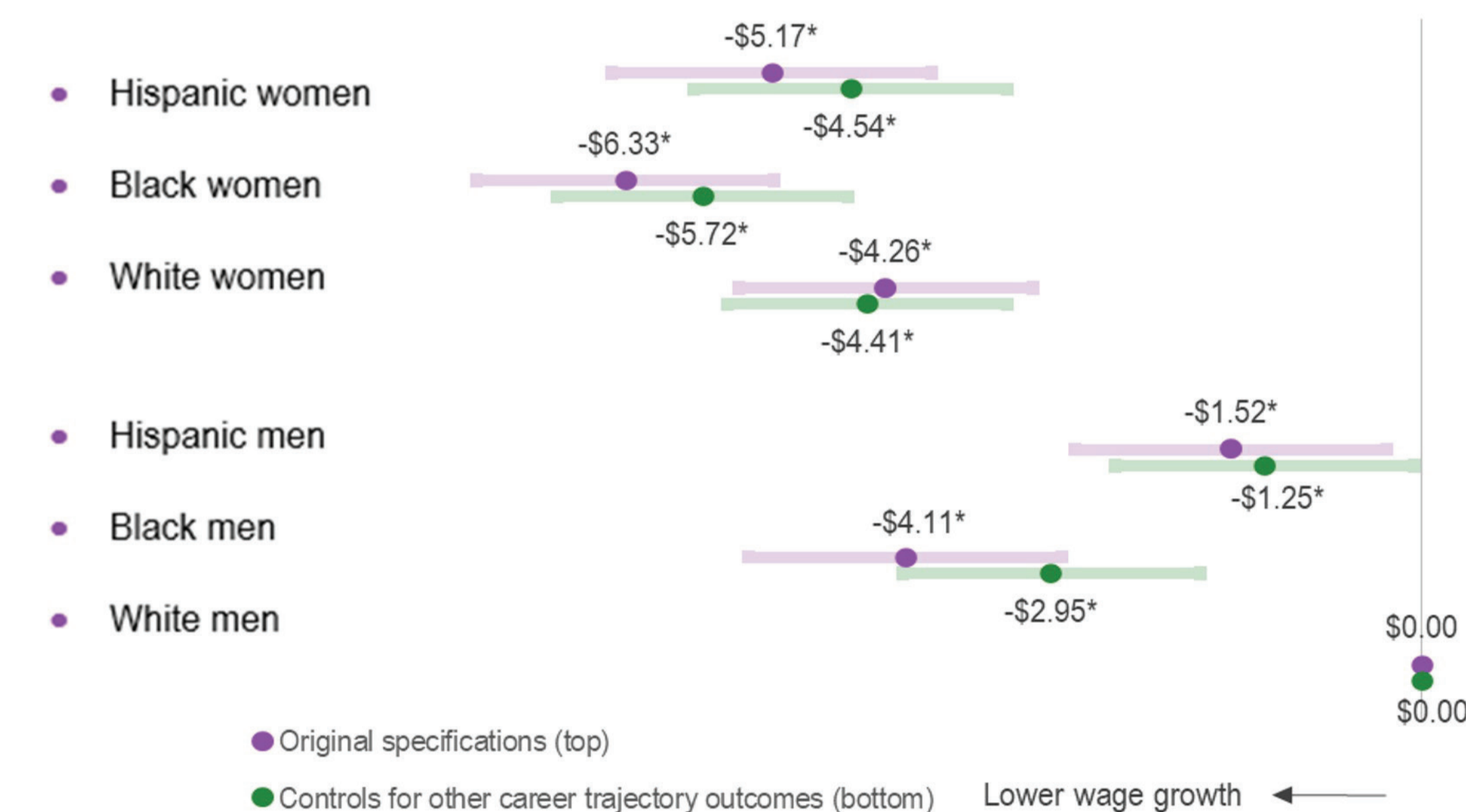
- Found that there is much less research on post-hire processes than on those related to hiring
- Suggests new areas for future research

### Key Findings

#### Occupations vary a lot in future wage growth prospects

- **After 10 years: 73% wage growth vs. 37% wage growth** for entrants in higher vs. lower wage growth occupations
- “Launchpad” occupations can be **found across many occupational fields**, but are most common in knowledge occupations like IT
- Launchpad occupations tend to require **skills like problem solving and communication** that are likely to be transferrable

#### Race and gender gaps in wage growth among peer entrants to mid-level occupations are large and pervasive



- Occupational segregation drives much earnings inequality, but intra-occupation wage growth gaps are also large
- The gaps are not explained by other career-related outcomes like further degree acquisition, advancement to occupations requiring a 4-year degree, or time out of the labor force
- This points to **inequitable dynamics within mid-level occupations** as causes, consistent with existing research literature

### Implications and Recommendations from Existing Literature

Racial bias has been found not just in hiring, but a range of post-hire employment processes:

- Task assignment
- Mentoring and formal training opportunities
- Job design/quality features that disproportionately harm women and workers of color
- Unwelcoming work environments or lack of recognition

#### Potentially Promising Anti-Bias Strategies

- **Greater transparency** in employer-specific outcomes
  - Equity metrics
  - More effective ways to use those metrics
- **Equitable use of technology**
- Understanding broader structural barriers that workers face, and identifying **elements of job design** like scheduling and leave policies that exacerbate their impact
- Create more **standardized mentoring and training**
- More **deeply engage workers of color and women** in evaluating and reinventing employment processes

#### Future Research Horizons

- **In-depth comparative examinations of career experiences** by race and gender of peers entering key occupations
  - Qualitative examination of on-the-job experiences
  - Quantitative examination of occupational transitions made
- Build **larger longitudinal data files** for local LMI and comparative intra-occupation and local area analyses
- **Study the impact of promising practices** to make advancement more equitable

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