From Proving Pretext to Proving Discrimination: The Real Lesson of Miller-El and Synder

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FROM PROVING PRETEXT TO PROVING DISCRIMINATION:
THE REAL LESSON OF MILLER-EL AND SNYDER

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In determining whether prosecutors have discriminated in their use of peremptory challenges, courts generally focus on whether defendants are able to prove that the nondiscriminatory reasons that prosecutors proffer for their challenges are pretextual. This focus is a natural result of the McDonnell Douglas framework, which the Supreme Court adopted for peremptory challenges from employment discrimination law. This Article argues that because of differences between jury selection and employment, the methods that employees use to prove pretext are not suited to peremptory challenges. Accordingly, while lower courts generally have interpreted two recent Supreme Court cases—Miller-El v. Dretke and Snyder v. Louisiana—as enumerating factors to be used in determining pretext, the cases are better interpreted as models for how courts should shift their focus from pretext.

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I. SMOKING OUT DISCRIMINATION BY PROVING PRETEXT
A. An Overview of Peremptory Challenges 4
B. Supreme Court Adopts McDonnell Douglas Framework to Detect Discrimination 5
C. Despite Batson, Discrimination through Peremptory Challenges Persists 8
D. Miller-El and Snyder Reinvigorate Batson 10
E. Courts Focus on Proof of Pretext 12

II. PROBLEM WITH PROVING PRETEXT
A. Proof of Pretext in Practice 15
   1. Employment Discrimination: Mbarika v. Board of Supervisors 17
   2. Peremptory Challenges: State v. Jacobs 18
B. Differences between Employment Decisions and Jury-Selection Decisions 19
   2. Information v. Hunch 22
C. Differences Prevent Defendants from Proving Pretext 25
   1. Defendants Generally Cannot Prove Reasons are Inaccurate 26
   2. Defendants Generally Cannot Prove Reasons are Implausible 28
   3. Defendants Generally Cannot Prove Reasons also Apply to Unchallenged Jurors 34
   4. Courts Generally Find Other Factors Cannot Prove Pretext 36

III. FOCUS ON PROVING DISCRIMINATION 38
A. Supreme Court Shifts Focus from Pretext to Discrimination in the Employment Context 42
B. Courts Should Shift Focus from Pretext to Discrimination in the Batson Context 43
   1. Frame Analysis with Statistics 44
   2. Inquire into Most Likely Explanation for Prosecutorial Action 46
   3. Focus on Discrimination 48

CONCLUSION 49

INTRODUCTION

Prosecutors have recently explained decisions to deny minorities a place on juries for many reasons: for example, having dyed-red hair, being too passive, being too vocal, being too old, being too young, working as an engineer, and teaching Sunday school. When

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1 See infra note 227 and accompanying text.
2 See infra note 213 and accompanying text.
3 See infra note 212 and accompanying text.
4 See infra note 210 and accompanying text.
5 See infra note 211 and accompanying text.
6 See infra note 225 and accompanying text.
7 See infra note 129 and accompanying text.
prosecutors presented these reasons, courts did not reject them as laughable, but accepted them as part of parties’ legitimate discretion over who to seat on their juries.

Prosecutors offered these reasons as explanations for peremptory challenges, which parties exercise during jury selection to eliminate prospective jurors from a venire unilaterally. Federal and state courts provide peremptory challenges to all parties, in civil and criminal cases, so that attorneys can strike veniremembers who they believe will be unfavorable to their case.

Historically, the challenges were used by prosecutors to eliminate African American veniremembers, who they theorized were not fit for service and would be sympathetic to black defendants. The Court tried to put an end to this shameful practice in *Batson v. Kentucky*, holding that the Equal Protection Clause prohibits parties from challenging jurors on the basis of race, guiding lower courts in detecting discrimination, and dictating that appellate courts reverse convictions found by juries from which veniremembers had been struck discriminatorily. But as the explanations above may suggest, and as much scholarship has argued, peremptory challenges are still used by some prosecutors as vehicles for discrimination.

The Court has held that the Equal Protection Clause also prohibits discrimination based on gender and discrimination by defense attorneys and attorneys for civil litigants. Accordingly, the arguments in this Article can also be applied to such situations. Because of the history of— and likely still occurring— prosecutorial discrimination, however, this Article will focus on prosecutors using peremptory challenges to eliminate African Americans. This focus corresponds to that of the courtroom in which the vast majority of *Batson* objections are made by criminal defendants to prosecutorial challenges of African American veniremembers.

Much of the inability of courts to detect discrimination can be attributed to the inherent difficulty of distinguishing when a challenge is based on a prediction that a prospective juror

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9 See *supra* notes 1–7 and accompanying text.

10 See *infra* Part I.D for a discussion of studies that suggest that prosecutors continue to discriminate.

11 See *infra* notes 38–40 and accompanying text.

12 See *infra* notes 25–30 for a brief overview of peremptory challenges as tools of racial discrimination.

13 See Kenneth J. Melilli, *Batson in Practice: What We Have Learned about Batson and Peremptory Challenges*, 71 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 447, 458 tbl.A-5 (1996) (finding that more than 88% of *Batson* challenges were raised by criminal defendants); *id.* at 462 tbl.E-1 (finding that in more than 87% of cases in which a party raised a *Batson* challenge, the objection was to the challenge of black veniremembers).
will be unfavorable and when a challenge is based on race. But this Article argues that the inability of courts to detect prosecutorial discrimination is also due to judicial application of the framework implemented by the Supreme Court for that purpose.

In *Batson*, the Court adopted the *McDonnell Douglas* framework, which it had previously applied in cases of employment discrimination. The three-part framework requires, on a finding of a prima facie case, that the alleged discriminator articulate a nondiscriminatory reason for its action. The alleged victim then has the burden of proving that the proffered reason is a pretext for discrimination. As traditionally applied, the framework therefore hinges on the ability of defendants to prove pretext.

In two recent cases—Miller-El v. Dretke[15] and Snyder v. Louisiana[16]—the Supreme Court used this framework to find that prosecutors had discriminated. Lower courts have interpreted these decisions as enumerating factors that they should consider in determining whether nondiscriminatory reasons are pretextual. This Article argues that this interpretation—and, more generally, this focus on pretext—is not suited to detecting discrimination in peremptory challenges.

To illustrate the problem, this Article compares courts’ application of the framework in employment cases—for which the Supreme Court initially applied the framework—and *Batson* challenges. Employers generally present business-related reasons, substantiated by business records. Employees can prove that the reasons are pretextual by showing that the records are inaccurate, that the reasons do not plausibly explain employers’ personnel decisions, or that the reasons apply to nonminority employees against whom the employers did not take similar actions.

Prosecutors, however, explain their challenges with strategic reasons, which they base on veniremembers’ background, demeanor, and statements during voir dire. Because the reasons are often just facial assertions about veniremember characteristics, defendants generally cannot show that the assertions are inaccurate; because prosecutors and courts can theorize numerous reasons why a veniremember might be sympathetic to a defendant, defendants generally cannot show a reason is implausible; because so many reasons are available to prosecutors, defendants often cannot compare between veniremembers about whom the prosecution has applied the same reason. Judicial focus on defendants’ ability to prove that

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14 Lawyers may believe prospective jurors will be unfavorable because of their race or gender. A strike based on such a belief is discriminatory, although some studies have shown connections between race and juror sympathies. See infra note 69.


reasons are pretextual thereby effectively prevents most defendants from proving discrimination.

The Supreme Court’s recent cases, *Miller-El* and *Snyder*, however, suggest that courts should no longer focus on pretext. The Court presaged such a shift in its post-*McDonnell Douglas* employment cases, which held that at the third step of the framework, courts must determine whether an employer has discriminated, not whether an employer’s reason is pretextual. The Court has been less explicit in the peremptory challenge context, but in *Miller-El* and *Snyder*, rather than considering defendants’ ability to show the falsity of individual proffered reasons to be dispositive, the Court evaluated all of the prosecutors’ actions that suggested a discriminatory intent.

Part I of this Article provides an overview of peremptory challenges and the adoption of the *McDonnell Douglas* framework, discussing how the framework naturally gave rise to a focus on pretext. Part II argues that the focus on pretext effectively prevents defendants from proving intentional discrimination. In illustrating this argument, Part II uses two recent cases, one employment discrimination claim and one *Batson* challenge, as lenses through which to understand the broader case law. The cases show that judicial conceptions of prosecutors’ jury-selection decisions—in contrast with judicial conceptions of employers’ personnel decisions—render prosecutors’ proffered nondiscriminatory reasons nearly impossible to disprove.

Part III proposes that *Miller-El* and *Snyder* require courts to move away from a narrow focus on pretext. Instead of looking at each challenged veniremember and determining if the defendant has proven the prosecution’s reasons for that challenge to be false, courts should frame their analyses around the prosecution’s pattern of strikes, determining if this pattern, given the totality of the prosecution’s actions, is more likely explained by the proffered reasons or by discrimination.

**I. SMOKING OUT DISCRIMINATION BY PROVING PRETEXT**

This Part provides a brief background of peremptory challenges, explaining their historical use by prosecutors to exclude African Americans from jury service. In *Batson v. Kentucky*, the Supreme Court prohibited this practice. Borrowing from employment law, it instituted the *McDonnell Douglas* framework to help defendants detect and demonstrate prosecutorial discrimination. Scholars, however, have concluded that use of the *McDonnell Douglas* framework has not succeeded in ending discrimination. Two recent Supreme Court
cases model a way to improve the framework, but lower courts, because of their focus on pretext, have yet to realize it.

A. An Overview of Peremptory Challenges

Peremptory challenges allow parties to strike prospective jurors from a venire without stating a reason. Parties can eliminate veniremembers who they believe will be partial, thereby, as asserted by the Supreme Court, increasing the accuracy of trials and parties’ confidence in their results.\(^\text{17}\) While not required by the Constitution,\(^\text{18}\) nearly every court in the U.S. allows peremptory challenges. In federal capital trials, parties are allowed twenty challenges while in other felony trials, the government is allocated six challenges and the defendant ten.\(^\text{19}\) In federal civil trials, both parties have three challenges.\(^\text{20}\) Every state also provides parties with challenges. While the number varies widely by state, parties in felony trials often have between six and ten challenges and as many as twenty-five in capital cases.\(^\text{21}\)

The procedures for using peremptory challenges also vary by court, but there are two primary types. In the “struck jury” method, after the parties have made their challenges for cause,\(^\text{22}\) a panel is seated with a number of prospective jurors equaling the number of jurors that will ultimately serve on the petit jury, plus the number of alternates needed, plus the total number of peremptory challenges allocated to the parties. The parties then use their challenges,

\(^{17}\) See Swain v. Alabama, 380 U.S. 202, 219 (1965) (“The function of the challenge is not only to eliminate extremes of partiality on both sides, but to assure the parties that the jurors before whom they try the case will decide on the basis of the evidence placed before them . . . .”).

\(^{18}\) See Stilson v. United States, 250 U.S. 583, 586 (1919) (“There is nothing in the Constitution of the United States which requires the Congress to grant peremptory challenges to defendants in criminal cases . . . .”).

\(^{19}\) Fed. R. Crim. P. 24(b)(1)-(2).


\(^{21}\) See Bureau of Justice Statistics, State Court Organization 2004, at 228–32 tbl.41 (2006), available at http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/sc04.pdf (last visited May 18, 2011) (charting peremptory challenges by state). Like the federal government, some states provide fewer challenges to the prosecution. States also provide fewer challenges in civil cases; generally, around three per party. Id.

\(^{22}\) The grounds for challenges for cause vary by state but are generally based on a showing that a prospective juror is actually biased or, because of a certain characteristic, is impliedly biased. See William P. Barnette, Ma, Ma, Where’s My Pa? On Your Jury, Ha, Ha, Ha!: A Constitutional Analysis of Implied Bias Challenges for Cause, 84 U. Det. Mercy L. Rev. 451, 456–59 (2007) (providing an overview of actual and implied bias); see, e.g., N.Y. Crim. Proc. Law § 270.20(1) (McKinney 2002) (providing that prospective jurors may be challenged for cause based on reasons such as a state of mind that will preclude the veniremember from impartiality; a relationship to a party; and service on or appearance before the indicting grand).
either in alternating fashion or—blind to the other party’s selections—simultaneously. The remaining jurors constitute the final panel.23

In the “jury box” method, a panel is seated with the number of prospective jurors that will ultimately serve on the petit jury. The parties, generally in alternating fashion, challenge prospective jurors for cause and peremptorily. Whenever a juror is struck, a new prospective juror is seated, so that the panel retains its original number. When the parties have used all of their allotted challenges, the remaining jurors constitute the petit jury.24

Adopted from English common law,25 peremptory challenges became tools of discrimination in the United States. Historically, African Americans were completely excluded from juries.26 When then Supreme Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits laws explicitly excluding African Americans from jury service,27 states used other methods of exclusion, such as “intelligence” requirements and the key man system, which allowed designated local officials to handpick jury pools.28 When the Court restricted these practices—at least in the criminal context—by holding that the Sixth Amendment dictates that juries must be drawn from a fair cross-section of the community,29 parties increasingly relied on peremptory challenges to exclude minorities.30

The Supreme Court tried to limit this discrimination in Swain v. Alabama, holding that a state violates the Equal Protection Clause31 when prosecutors deny jurors the right to serve on the basis of their race.32 The Court held, however, that a prosecutor’s exercise of challenges in any given case could not constitute a Constitutional violation.33 A defendant could only claim a

23 Kathleen M. McKenna, Jury Trial Issues, in CURRENT DEVELOPMENT IN FEDERAL PRACTICE 581, 587–88 (PRACTICING LAW INST. 2010).
24 Id. at 588.
26 See id. at 828 n.96 (describing state laws that prevented African Americans from serving on juries).
27 Strauder v. West Virginia, 100 U.S. 303 (1879).
28 EQUAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE, ILLEGAL RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN JURY SELECTION: A CONTINUING LEGACY 9–10 (2010); see also Hoffman, supra note 25, at 828 (summarizing state methods of excluding African American jurors).
31 U.S. CONST. AMPEND. XIV, §1.
33 Id. at 221.
violation if “in case after case, whatever the circumstances, whatever the crime and whoever the
defendant or the victim may be,” a prosecutor used challenges to remove all African Americans from the venire.34

In Batson v. Kentucky, the Court found that this requirement, especially as interpreted
by lower courts, placed a “crippling burden of proof” on defendants,35 making peremptory
challenges “largely immune from constitutional scrutiny.”36 The Batson Court accordingly held
that a defendant could make an Equal Protection claim based just on challenges exercised by the
prosecution in the defendant’s specific case.37 Batson thereby prohibits prosecutors from using
peremptory challenges to strike any juror because of the juror’s race. Subsequent cases have
extended the holding to discrimination based on gender38 and by defendants39 and civil
litigants.40

But, as argued by Chief Justice Burger in dissent to Batson, and as reflected in the
majority opinion in Swain, it is one thing to prohibit discrimination, but quite another to enforce
the prohibition. Lawyers use peremptory challenges to eliminate prospective jurors who may be
biased against their case,41 but they cannot conclusively know ex ante whether a juror will be
biased. Lawyers must therefore make hunches based on the limited information that they
gather during voir dire.42 To allow for these hunches, peremptory challenges can be exercised
“without a reason stated.”43 Accordingly, how is a court to separate legitimate challenges, which
may be based on an “assumption” or “intuitive judgment,” from those made because of race?44

34 Id. at 223–24.
36 Id at 92–93.
37 Id. at 96.
41 See infra note 17 (describing the purposes of peremptory challenges).
42 Swain, 380 U.S. at 220 (“T]he peremptory permits rejection for a real or imagined partiality . . . . It is
often exercised upon the ‘sudden impressions and unaccountable prejudices . . . .’”) (citation omitted).
43 Id.
44 Batson, 476 U.S. at 123 (Burger, C.J., dissenting) (“A clause that requires a minimum ‘rationality’ in
government actions has no application to ‘an arbitrary and capricious right’ . . . .”) (quoting Swain, 380 U.S.
at 219); see also Miller-El v. Dretke, 545 U.S. 231, 238 (2005) (“The rub has been the practical difficulty of
ferreting out discrimination in selections discretionary by nature . . . .”).
B. Supreme Court Adopts McDonnell Douglas Framework to Detect Discrimination

To solve the problem of proof, the *Batson* Court borrowed from employment law, where a similar problem exists. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employers from discriminating on the basis of race, sex, religion, and national origin. But employers, under the common law doctrine of employment at will, have discretion in managing or terminating their employees. Accordingly, while employment discrimination is governed by statute and peremptory challenges by the Equal Protection Clause, in both situations, factfinders must determine if a party acted on the basis of legitimate discretion or discriminatory motives.

Now that courts and legislators have imposed consequences on employers and prosecutors for overt discrimination, parties are unlikely to produce direct evidence of their discrimination. Employers generally do not produce memoranda stating that a manager did not hire an applicant because of race, and prosecutors will rarely explain to courts that they challenged a potential juror because of race. Accordingly, the Court, in *McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green*, applied a three-step framework to allow proof of discrimination through circumstantial evidence. In *Batson*, the Court adopted this framework for peremptory challenges: (1) the employee or defendant must make a prima facie case; (2) the employer or prosecutor must rebut it by giving a nondiscriminatory reason for the employment decision or challenge; (3) the employee or defendant must prove that there was, contrary to the reason proffered, purposeful discrimination.

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46 *See*, e.g., NLRB v. J. Weingarten, Inc., 420 U.S. 251, 273–74 (1975) (“The power to discipline or discharge employees has been recognized uniformly as one of the elemental prerogatives of management.”); Adair v. United States, 208 U.S. 161, 175–76 (1908) (“In the absence, however, of a valid contract . . . it cannot be . . . that an employer is under any legal obligation, against his will, to retain an employé in his personal service . . . .”).


49 *Trans World Airlines v. Thurston*, 469 U.S. 111, 121 (1985) (“The shifting burdens of proof set forth in *McDonnell Douglas* are designed to assure that the ‘plaintiff [has] his day in court despite the unavailability of direct evidence.’”) (citations omitted) (brackets in original).

50 *Batson*, 476 U.S. at 96–98.
The prima facie case eliminates the most common nondiscriminatory reasons for an action. For instance, in the employment hiring context, a plaintiff must show that he or she applied for a job, was qualified, rejected, and that after the rejection, the employer continued to solicit applicants. This evidence, along with the plaintiff’s membership in a protected class, raises an inference that the employer rejected that plaintiff not for legitimate reasons, but because of discrimination.

Similarly, a defendant must show that a prospective juror of a given race or gender—the defendant need not be of the same race or gender—was qualified for service. This means only that a veniremember was not struck for cause, but was struck peremptorily. The defendant must show that this fact, along with any other relevant facts, raise an inference of discrimination.

At the second step, to avoid a finding of discrimination, an employer or prosecutor must provide a nondiscriminatory explanation. Accordingly, instead of speculating about what an alleged discriminator’s motives might be, an employee or defendant is armed with “clear and reasonably specific” reasons and can “smoke out” discrimination by showing, at the third step, that the proffered reason was not the true reason for the employer or prosecutor’s action.

52 McDonnell Douglas, 411 U.S. at 802.
53 See Furnco Constr. Corp. v. Waters, 438 U.S. 567, 577 (1978) (“A prima facie case under McDonnell Douglas raises an inference of discrimination only because we presume these acts, if otherwise unexplained, are more likely than not based on the consideration of impermissible factors”).
56 Id.
57 See Johnson v. California, 545 U.S. 162, 172 (2005) (“The Batson framework is designed to produce actual answers to suspicions and inferences . . . . The inherent uncertainty present in inquiries of discriminatory purpose counsels against engaging in needless and imperfect speculation when a direct answer can be obtained by asking a simple question.”) (citations omitted).
58 Batson, 476 U.S. at 98 n.20 (citing Dep’t of Cmty. Affairs v. Burdine, 450 U.S. 248, 258 (1981)).
59 See Deborah C. Malamud, The Last Minuet, Disparate Treatment after Hicks, 93 Mich. L. Rev. 2230, 2275 (1995) (“As originally envisioned, McDonnell Douglas-Burdine probably functioned as a primitive quasi-discovery device, aimed at “smoking out” the employer’s evidence as to why it acted adversely to the plaintiff.”).
Despite the prohibition of intentional discrimination, prosecutors seemingly continue to target minority veniremembers with peremptory challenges. Studies of jury-selection patterns reveal shocking disparities in prosecutorial use of peremptory challenges against white and minority prospective jurors. In Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, between 1994 and 2002, prosecutors challenged more than 55% of African American veniremembers but less than 17% of white veniremembers. Between 2005 and 2009, in Houston County, Alabama, which is 27% African American, prosecutors used peremptory challenges to eliminate 80% of African American veniremembers so that the resulting juries were either all white or had only one African American member. Exclusion of African Americans is not confined to the South. In Philadelphia, between 1981 and 1997, prosecutors in capital murder cases challenged 51% of African American veniremembers but only 26% of white veniremembers.

Part of these disparities is likely caused by unintentional or unconscious discrimination, which, while undesirable, is not prohibited by the Equal Protection Clause as it is currently understood. But part of the disparities is also likely due to intentional prosecutorial discrimination against African Americans. Some treatises instruct lawyers to

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62 David C. Baldus et al., The Use of Peremptory Challenges in Capital Murder Trials: A Legal and Empirical Analysis, 3 U. Pa. J. Const. L 3, 53 tbl.2 (2001). The statistics were reversed for defendants, who struck 26% of black veniremembers and 54% of white veniremembers. Id.


64 See Jeffrey S. Brand, The Supreme Court, Equal Protection and Jury Selection: Denying that Race Still Matters, 1994 Wis. L. Rev. 511, 609 (1994) (“Batson’s lower court progeny would demonstrate conclusively that . . . proof of discriminatory purpose dominated the Court’s jury-related equal protection jurisprudence.”); Robin Charlow, Tolerating Deception and Discrimination After Batson, 50 Stan. L. Rev. 9, 32–38 (1997) (analyzing the progression of Supreme Court peremptory challenge cases to conclude that “it appears to be subjective motivation that is determinative.”); Page, supra note 63, at 171–72 (finding that the Supreme Court requires “subjective discriminatory intent”).
consider race while selecting juries, and some jury-selection consultants advertise their ability to select jurors of the ideal “demographic.” More directly, in interviews, lawyers admit to considering the race of veniremembers.

Prosecutorial use of peremptory challenges may no longer depend on beliefs of racial inferiority. Instead, it may stem from prosecutors’ pursuit of zealous advocacy: Some empirical studies suggest that African Americans are less likely to find defendants guilty. As long as this is true, or is widely believed to be true, prosecutors will likely continue to target African Americans with peremptory challenges. Needless to say, excluding potential African American jurors because of beliefs about their likely sympathies is no less an action of intentional discrimination than is excluding them because of beliefs about their mental capacities.

Along with this evidence that prosecutorial discrimination still exists, there is also strong evidence that defendants are often unable to demonstrate it using the McDonnell Douglas framework. While the success rate of parties raising Batson challenges varies widely by jurisdiction, Professor Kenneth Melilli found that in many states and federal circuits the rate is shockingly low. For example, in Georgia, parties prevailed less than 13% of the time; in Missouri, less than 9%; in the Fifth Circuit, 4%; and in Louisiana and the Eight Circuit, less than 3%. Professor Jeffrey Brand found similarly low success rates in his study of federal courts.

See, e.g., V. Hale Starr & Mark McCormick, Jury Selection 193–200 (3rd ed. 2001) (explaining how to weigh demographic variables, including race, to determine the best veniremembers for a case).

In 2005, Justice Breyer cited jury-selection literature referencing race, Miller-El v. Dretke, 545 U.S. 231, 271 (2005) (Breyer, J., concurring), and consultants continue to suggest race plays a role. See, e.g., Jury Research Institute, Juror Profiles, http://www.juryresearchinstitute.com/services/juror-profiles/ (last visited Apr. 3, 2010) (“Juror profiles developed by JRI professionals provide you with clear, concise summaries of the experiences, attitudes and demographic characteristics of jurors who are favorably or unfavorably predisposed toward your case.”).


See supra notes 26–30 (summarizing the historical exclusion of black jurors).

See Baldus et al., supra note 62, at 15–22 (summarizing empirical studies of juror voting tendencies).

See, e.g., Marvin Zalman & Olga Tsoudis, Plucking Weeds from the Garden: Lawyers Speak about Voir Dire, 51 Wayne L. Rev. 163, 303 (2005) (interviewing attorneys and finding that “perhaps the most common theme, . . . is that African Americans were likely to favor criminal defendants and civil plaintiffs.”).

Melilli, supra note 13, at 468 tbl.F-4. Some states have substantially higher success rates: nearly 22% in Alabama, nearly 25% in Texas, and about 39% in New York. Id.

Brand, supra note 64, at 586 tbls. 1-2 (1994) (finding that district courts found discrimination in twelve percent of cases, and circuit courts found discrimination or remanded in less than sixteen percent of cases in which a Batson challenge was made). Melilli coded the success rate of a Batson challenge based on its
While both Brand and Melilli examined pre-1994 decisions, a recent study suggests that success rates, at least at the appellate level, have not improved. Surveying federal decisions from 2000 through 2009, Professors Jeffrey Ballin and Junichi Semitsu found that federal courts reversed or remanded less than eleven percent of trial court denials of Batson challenges.

These numbers may even overstate the success rates of defendants bringing Batson challenges against the exclusion of African American veniremembers. Melilli found an overall success rate of less than 18%, but found that criminal defendants were successful less than 16% of the time. Melilli also found that Batson challenges regarding African American veniremembers, by far the most common challenge made, were less successful than challenges regarding both genders and every other race, except for Hispanic and Native American veniremembers.

Based on these statistics, Melilli concluded that “Batson is almost surely a failure.” Other scholars have similarly concluded that despite Batson, discrimination “continue[s] to flourish.” This view has also been voiced on the Supreme Court: Justice Breyer has asserted that Batson has not achieved its goal of eradicating racial discrimination in jury selection.

D. Miller-El and Snyder Reinvigorate Batson

A surefire way to end the use of peremptory challenges to discriminate would be to eliminate peremptory challenges. Justices Marshall and Breyer have advocated for elimination, and scholars frequently propose elimination as the best solution. But Justices Marshall and

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73 Melilli, supra note 13, at 456 n.67.
74 Jeffrey Bellin & Junichi P. Semitsu, Widening Batson’s Net to Ensnare More than the Unapologetically Bigoted or Painfully Unimaginative Attorney, 96 CORNELL L. REV. 1075, 1092 (2011)
75 Melilli, supra note 13, at 459 tbl.B-1.
76 Id. at 464 tbl.E-4.
77 Id. at 503.
78 Baldus et al., supra note 62, at 128.
81 See, e.g., Baldus et al., supra note 62, at 129; Hoffman, supra note 25; Melilli, supra note 13, at 502–03; Page, supra note 63, at 245. Instead of elimination, the use of peremptory challenges could be restricted.
Breyer’s opinions have not gained support within the Court, and every state—and the federal rules—continues to provide parties with peremptory challenges.

In two recent decisions—Miller-El v. Dretke, decided in 2005, and Snyder v. Louisiana, decided in 2008—the Supreme Court has, however, for the first time, reversed trial courts to hold that the prosecution discriminated. In reaching these decisions, the Court followed the *McDonnell Douglas* framework that it adopted in *Batson*, evaluating whether the prosecution’s step-two explanations were pretext for discrimination. The Court’s decisions were based on fact-intensive evaluations of the reasons given by the prosecution and the statements made by veniremembers. As such, the precedent of *Miller-El* and *Snyder* is unclear; the Court found pretext and discrimination because the facts, as interpreted by the Court, suggested pretext and discrimination. Whether peremptory challenges in future cases are discriminatory will depend on the precise reasons given by the prosecution and the specific statements and attributes of the veniremembers.

Scholars have argued that that fact-intensive nature of the analyses is the lesson lower courts should take from the Supreme Court. While defendants bear the burden of proving pretext, courts must not quickly accept prosecutors’ nondiscriminatory reasons, but must probe the facts to make sure such reasons are supported. Through its analysis in *Miller-El* and *Snyder*,

See, e.g., Baldus et al., *supra* note 62, at 130 (proposing that courts limit the percentage of its peremptory challenges that a party could use against a given minority); Jean Montoya, *The Future of the Post-Batson Peremptory Challenge: Voir Dire by Questionnaire and the “Blind” Peremptory*, 29 U. Mich. J.L. Reform 981 (1996) (proposing that voir dire be exercised through questionnaires, so that parties could not see the veniremembers).


See *supra* notes 19–21 and accompanying text (providing an overview of the number of peremptory challenges available to parties in state and federal courts).


545 U.S. at 239–40; 553 U.S at 476–77. The Court’s analysis is more complicated because it is reviewing a lower court decision. Because *Miller-El* was an appeal for habeas corpus relief, the Court could only find for the defendant if it found that the state decision was “an unreasonable determination of the facts in light of the evidence presented in the State court proceeding.” 545 U.S. at 240 (quoting the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, 28 U.S.C. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d)(2)). *Snyder* was not a habeas case, but even on direct appeal, the trial court’s ruling was entitled to deferential review. 553 U.S. at 477.

the Supreme Court demonstrated the types of facts courts should consider when evaluating these reasons.

The Court analyzed whether the prosecution used voir dire to question veniremembers about the issues that the prosecution later claimed were the grounds for challenge and inquired whether these grounds seemed like plausible reasons to use a challenge. The Court also analyzed whether these reasons, which supposedly lead the prosecution to challenge African American veniremembers, also applied to white veniremembers who the prosecution did not challenge. The Court also considered the percentage of African American veniremembers who were challenged by the prosecution relative to the percentage of white veniremembers and compared the questions that the prosecution asked to African American and white veniremembers. The Court additionally inquired whether there were historical practices of discrimination within the district attorney’s office that was trying the case.

Many lower courts have responded to Miller-El and Snyder by using the above considerations in their analyses, and even before the Supreme Court cases, many states had

58 BAYLOR L. REV. 949, 979 (2006) (“[T]he Court advanced—by way of example—the extremely detailed factual analysis that lower courts should undertake.”); Jennifer Ross, Comment, Snyder v. Louisiana: Demand for Judicial Scrutiny of the Use of Peremptory Challenges, 4 DUKE J. CONST. L. PUB. POL’Y SIDEBAR 305, 305 (2009) (“Snyder demands a higher level of scrutiny from trial courts when they determine the presence of racially discriminatory intent and urges a more critical analysis of the race-neutral explanations proffered by lawyers using peremptory challenges.”).

88 Miller-El, 545 U.S. at 250 n.8 (noting that the prosecution did not question a black veniremember about a convicted brother despite this being the stated reason for the challenge); see also Snyder, 552 U.S. at 484 (finding that, in contrast with the African American veniremember who the prosecution challenged, the prosecution questioned a white veniremember who had substantial out-of-court obligations to obtain assurances that he could serve).

89 Snyder, 552 U.S. at 482 (finding that the prosecution’s assertion that a veniremember who was a student teacher would find the defendant guilty only of a lesser included offense so as to speed deliberations and return to the classroom was “highly speculative.”); see also Miller-El, 545 U.S. at 252 (“[A] prosecutor simply has got to state his reasons as best he can and stand or fall on the plausibility of the reasons he gives.”).

90 See Snyder, 552 U.S. at 483–84; Miller-El, 545 U.S. at 241–52.

91 Miller-El, 545 U.S. at 240–41.

92 See, e.g., id. at 255, 261.

93 Id. at 263–64. The Court made clear that evidence outside the specific case can be used to show pretext. See id. at 240 (“[A]lthough some false reasons are shown up within the four corners of a given case, sometimes a court may not be sure unless it looks beyond the case at hand.”).

adopted similar lists of factors for courts to consider. Factor tests are likely beneficial for detecting discrimination. Studies have found that when courts find that proffered reasons are pretextual, they often do so based on many of the factors described above. Establishing and scrutinizing factors can also incentivize trial courts to make findings on the record for each factor, thereby aiding in appellate review. Nonetheless, lower courts that read Miller-El and Snyder as merely confirming the appropriateness of factor tests miss a key aspect of the opinions and are unlikely to meaningfully increase their detection of discrimination.

E. Courts Focus on Proof of Pretext

Lower courts err by focusing their analyses on whether defendants have proven the prosecution’s nondiscriminatory reasons to be pretextual. This focus on pretext is unsurprising; it is a natural result of the McDonnell Douglas framework. While the framework has three steps, the Court has set low thresholds for the first two. When making a prima facie case, the Court has held that a defendant does not need to persuade the court that discrimination likely occurred, but only needs to produce evidence that would permit the judge to draw such an inference. Similarly, at the second step, the Court has dictated that nondiscriminatory reasons do not have to be “persuasive, or even plausible;” so as long as they are not inherently discriminatory, they survive.


96 See, e.g., Melilli, supra note 13, at 478–83 (examining decisions in which courts rejected proffered reasons and finding that courts gave rationales such as disparate treatment or insufficient voir dire of challenged jurors or cited prosecution reasons that were unsupported by the record, unpersuasive, or based on stereotypes); William C. Slusser, David Hricik & Matthew P. Eastus, Batson, J.E.B., and Purskett: A Step-by-Step-by-Step Guide to Making and Challenging Peremptory Challenges in Federal Court, 37 S. Tex. L. Rev. 127, 154–55 (1996) (finding that parties can show pretext using factors such as disparate treatment, disparate examination, insufficient voir dire of challenged jurors, reasons unrelated to case, or reasons based on stereotypes).


100 Id.
Because the first two steps can be so easily satisfied, courts focus their analyses on the third step. In *Batson*, the Court articulated the third step as a determination of whether “the defendant has established purposeful discrimination.” The employment cases from which the Court adopted the framework suggest that this determination depends on whether an alleged victim of discrimination has proven the proffered nondiscriminatory reason to be pretextual. In *McDonnell Douglas*, the Court remanded the case to allow the plaintiff-employee an “opportunity to show that [the employer’s] stated reason for [the employee’s] rejection was in fact pretext.” Similarly, in *Texas Department of Community Affairs v. Burdine*, the Court articulated the third step of the analysis as requiring the plaintiff to prove “that the legitimate reasons offered by the defendant were not its true reasons, but were a pretext for discrimination.” In *Batson*, the Court cited *Burdine* for the proposition that a prosecutor must give “clear and reasonably specific” nondiscriminatory reasons, which, in *Burdine*, the Court said are necessary to provide “a full and fair opportunity to demonstrate pretext.”

Given these statements in *Batson* and in the employment cases from which *Batson* is drawn, when evaluating peremptory challenges, lower courts generally focus on proof of pretext. Many states courts that developed factor tests before *Miller-El* and *Snyder*—including Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, New York, and Texas—pronounced that the factors are

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101 Despite the low thresholds, judges do screen out some claims at the preliminary steps. See Melilli, supra note 13, at 460–61 (1996) (finding that judges rejected about thirty-eight percent of prima facie cases and about twenty-two percent of neutral explanations). There is significant variation between jurisdictions. See id. at 467 (showing prima facie success rate by state and federal circuit). Jeffrey Brand found that courts reject prima facie cases a majority of the time, although his study just examined federal courts, a relatively small sample size. Brand, supra note 64, at 586.


105 *Batson*, 476 U.S. at 98 n.20 (citing *Burdine*, 450 U.S. at 258).

106 *Burdine*, 450 U.S. at 256.

107 See *Ex parte Branch*, 526 So.2d 609, 624 ( Ala. 1987) (“[T]he following are illustrative of the types of evidence that can be used to show sham or pretext . . . .”).


109 See *Manning v. State*, 765 So.2d 516, 519 (Miss. 2000) (“This Court has identified five indicia of pretext when analyzing proffered race-neutral reason for peremptory strikes under *Batson* . . . .”).

110 See *People v. Ritchie*, 217 A.D.2d 84, 89 (N.Y. App. Div. 1995) (“The determination as to whether a given explanation is or is not pretextual will also depend on a variety of factors . . . .”).
to be used to determine whether a proffered reason is pretextual, and after Miller-El and Snyder, courts often continue to focus on pretext, a trend that is demonstrated—and criticized—in Part II.

II. PROBLEM WITH PROVING PRETEXT

To understand the problem with the judicial focus on proof of pretext, it is helpful to compare the application of the McDonnell Douglas framework in peremptory challenges with its application in employment discrimination cases. In both types of cases, courts focus on proof of pretext. But because of the differences between jury selection and employment, the methods that employees use for proving pretext are generally unavailing for defendants making Batson challenges. Section A introduces a recent employment case and peremptory challenge case, and Section B presents two differences between the judicial conceptions of jury selection and employee selection. Section C, drawing from the examples in Section A and the case law more generally, demonstrates that even when courts utilize the factors enumerated in Miller-El and Snyder, these differences often prevent defendants from proving pretext.

A. Proof of Pretext in Practice

This section introduces two discrimination cases recently decided by the Louisiana courts: Mbarika v. Board of Supervisors, an employment case decided in 2008, and State v Jacobs, a peremptory challenge case decided in 2010. In both cases, the courts focused their analyses on whether the nondiscriminatory reasons proffered by the alleged discriminators—the employer and the prosecutor—were pretext for discrimination.

1. Employment Discrimination: Mbarika v. Board of Supervisors

Upon conclusion of Professor Victor Mbarika’s three-year term at Louisiana State University (LSU), the school did not offer him tenure. Dr. Mbarika sued, claiming that LSU had discriminated on the basis of his African American race. LSU countered that Dr. Mbarika was

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111 See Brumfield v. Exxon Corp., 63 S.W.3d 912, 917 (Tex. Ct. App. 2002) (“Factors the trial court may consider in determining whether the explanation for a peremptory challenge is merely a pretext include . . .”).


113 32 So.3d 227 (La. 2010).

114 Mbarika, 992 So.2d at 553–54.
not offered tenure because of his performance. The trial court granted summary judgment for LSU, and the Louisiana Court of Appeals reviewed the decision, applying the *McDonnell Douglas* framework to determine if performance was the real reason for LSU's action or a pretext for racial motivations.

To determine the genuineness of LSU's proffered reason, the court examined evidence offered by LSU. At hiring, LSU provided Dr. Mbarika with its tenure policy, which dictated that offers would be based on research, evaluated by publication in leading academic journals. Over the course of his term, Dr. Mbarika received annual performance reviews, which noted that his publications were in lower-tiered journals and advised him to target more prestigious journals.

Dr. Mbarika argued that despite this evidence, the reason of performance was pretextual. He claimed that he had articles in the "revise and resubmit" stage at top journals, which were ignored during his performance reviews, and he argued that the quantity of articles that he published was greater than that of a white candidate who was offered tenure.

LSU countered these claims. A department chair's deposition explained that articles in a "revise and resubmit" stage have not yet been accepted so are not given significant consideration. The chairperson further explained that LSU was primarily concerned with the quality, not quantity, of publications, and that the white candidate had published in top journals. Based on this evidence, the court concluded that Dr. Mbarika had not met his burden of showing that LSU's neutral reason of performance was pretext for racial discrimination.

2. Peremptory Challenges: State v. Jacobs

An analogous use of the *McDonnell Douglas* framework is found in the Louisiana Supreme Court's analysis of peremptory challenges in State v. Jacobs. Like in *Mbarika*, the

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115 *Id.* at 562. LSU also contended that Dr. Mbarika was not offered tenure because of his unsatisfactory teaching and lack of professionalism. *Id.* LSU did offer Dr. Mbarika a one-year contract, which was terminable at will. *Id.* at 554.

116 *Id.* at 554.

117 *Id.* at 555–57 (discussing Dr. Mbarika's performance reviews).

118 *Id.* at 558.

119 *Id.* at 558–59.

120 The appellate court affirmed the trial court's summary judgment finding for LSU. *Id.* at 562. The Louisiana Supreme Court subsequently denied certiorari. Mbarika v. Bd. of Supervisors, 992 So.2d 1019 (La. 2008).

121 32 So.3d 227 (La. 2010).
Jacobs court reviewed a trial court’s ruling that a party did not engage in racial discrimination and focused its inquiry on whether the reasons given by the alleged discriminator were pretextual.\textsuperscript{122}

The court first considered the challenge of veniremember Eric Hughes. The prosecution argued that it struck Mr. Hughes not because he was Latino, but because he had a medical condition and asked to be excused; the prosecutor theorized that jurors who do not want to serve are likely to be hostile to the state.\textsuperscript{123} The defendant argued that there was no evidence on the record of Mr. Hughes’ medical condition,\textsuperscript{124} but the court found that because of an out-of-court discussion that Mr. Hughes had with a bailiff, “[t]he condition was plausible.”\textsuperscript{125} The defense also tried to show that the reason was pretextual by pointing to a white veniremember who also disclosed a medical condition, but who the prosecution did not strike. The court, however, found the comparison inapposite. The white veniremember had diabetes, which the court explained can be managed with food and breaks so that a juror can comfortably serve; Mr. Hughes had a muscular condition, which the court surmised could prevent him from sitting for long durations.\textsuperscript{126}

The court also addressed the challenge of Leola Florence, an African American, in detail. The prosecution presented a variety of reasons for the challenge, including Ms. Florence’s previous service on a hung jury.\textsuperscript{127} The defendant countered that a white prospective juror had also served on a hung jury, but was not challenged. The court, however, noted that unlike the white juror, Ms. Florence indicated that the hung jury did not know what to do. Also, unlike the white juror, the prosecutor observed Ms. Florence sleeping during voir dire, and Ms. Florence had revealed that she was a possible victim in an unrelated case.\textsuperscript{128}

For three other peremptory challenges the prosecution also proffered multiple reasons. Melanie Auzenne avoided eye contact, formerly worked in the district attorney’s office, and

\textsuperscript{122} In Jacobs, there was an intermediate appellate court ruling that the prosecution had engaged in racial discrimination. 13 So.3d 677 (La. Ct App. 2009). After the supreme court ruling discussed in this subsection, the supreme court granted rehearing to clarify that it was remanding the case to the appellate court for issues raised by the defendant that were pretermitted by the appellate court’s earlier ruling. State v. Jacobs, 37 So.3d 994 (La. 2010). On remand the appellate court upheld the conviction. State v. Jacobs, 2011 WL 2020747, No. 07-KA-887 (La Ct. App. May 24, 2011).

\textsuperscript{123} 32 So.3d at 230.

\textsuperscript{124} 13 So.3d at 690.

\textsuperscript{125} 32 So.3d at 229–30.

\textsuperscript{126} Id.

\textsuperscript{127} Id. at 231.

\textsuperscript{128} Id.
spontaneously said she had never been accused of anything; Ivory Jordan wore shorts, worked at a casino, gave a disgusted look, and spoke with hesitation; Virginia Stevenson was asleep during voir dire, taught Sunday School, had relatives in jail, and had found for the plaintiff in a civil case. The court held that the defendant was not able to show that these reasons were pretextual and therefore had not proven discrimination.\textsuperscript{129}

\textbf{B. Differences between Employment Decisions and Jury-Selection Decisions}

While the courts in \textit{Mbarika} and \textit{Jacobs} both focused on proof of pretext, their analyses of pretext are different. This difference is caused by divergent judicial expectations about employment decisions and jury-selection choices. Employers make decisions for business reasons, whereas prosecutors make decisions for strategic reasons; and employers make decisions based on information, whereas prosecutors make decisions based on hunch.

\textit{1. Business Reasons v. Strategic Reasons}

Outside of discriminatory conduct, employers theoretically have unlimited discretion over whether to hire, promote, discipline, or fire employees.\textsuperscript{130} Accordingly, at the second step of the \textit{McDonnell Douglas} framework, employers can offer any reason for their actions,\textsuperscript{131} even those that seem like bad reasons for an employment decision,\textsuperscript{132} such as personal animus or gut feelings.\textsuperscript{133}

Employers, however, know that they will face liability if, at the third step, employees can show that their proffered reasons are pretextual and are therefore motivated to offer reasons that courts will find persuasive. Unsurprisingly, given that employers are attempting to justify personnel decisions, the Supreme Court has suggested that the most persuasive reasons are those that relate to the business needs of the employer. "[I]n a business setting," the Court

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Id} at 234–35.

\textsuperscript{130} See \textit{supra} note 46 and accompanying text (discussing employment at will). Beyond discrimination law, there are other constraints on employers’ freedom to terminate. See, e.g., David J. Walsh & Joshua L. Schwartz, \textit{State Common Law Wrongful Discharge Doctrines: Up-Date, Refinement, and Rationales}, 33 AM. BUS. L.J. 645 (1996) (discussing the proliferation of state wrongful discharge doctrines).

\textsuperscript{131} See \textit{supra} notes 99–100 and accompanying text (discussing the low burden at the second step).

\textsuperscript{132} See RICHARD A. EPSTEIN, \textit{FORBIDDEN GROUNDS: THE CASE AGAINST EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION LAWS} 5 (1992) ("Any person may refuse to contract for no reason at all, or even for bad reasons that lie outside the reach of the discrimination principle.").

\textsuperscript{133} The Court has even found that employers can articulate non-discriminatory reasons that violate other laws. Hazen Paper Co. v. Biggins, 507 U.S. 604, 612 (1993) (finding that an employer does not violate ADEA by firing an employee in violation of ERISA).
has articulated, “more often than not people do not act . . . without any underlying reasons.”

The Court found that by enacting antidiscrimination legislation, Congress expected employers to “focus on the qualifications of the applicant or employee.”

As explained by Professor Richard Epstein, “[i]n some cases it might be possible [for an employer] to show that there was a bad [but nondiscriminatory] . . . reason [for its employment decision]. But in the typical case the best line of defense is to show that a refusal to hire or a decision to fire was made for a good cause, that is, for legitimate business reasons unrelated to race or sex.”

LSU, for instance, justified its rehiring decision based on Dr. Mbarika’s publication record, and recent employment cases heard by the Supreme Court reveal employer reasons of efficiency, corporate reorganization, matching positions with employee skills, performance evaluations, seniority, insubordination, employee qualifications, and employee misconduct. Treatises providing an overview of employers’ nondiscriminatory

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136 EPSTEIN, supra note 132, at 147–48; see also Catherine J. Lanctot, The Defendant Lies and the Plaintiff Loses: The Fallacy of the “Pretext Plus” Rule in Employment Discrimination Cases, 43 HASTINGS L.J. 57, 137 (1991) (“If the defendant generates an unseemly or arbitrary reason for its employment action that has no relation to any legitimate business objective, it should be easier . . . to prove that it is pretextual.”). Employers do not always give business-related reasons. Courts accept the reason of personal animosity, a trend critiqued in the employment literature. See generally Mark S. Brodin, The Demise of Circumstantial Proof in Employment Discrimination Litigation: St. Mary’s Honor Center v. Hicks, Pretext, and the “Personality Excuse”, 18 BERKELEY J. EMP. & LAB. L. 183 (1997); Chad Derum & Karen Engle, The Rise of the Personal Animosity Presumption in Title VII and the Return to “No Cause” Employment, 81 TEX. L. REV. 1177, 1122 (2003).
137 See supra note 117 (presenting LSU’s argument that Dr. Mbarika had not published in top-tier journals).
138 This paragraph references all employment discrimination cases published by the Supreme Court since 2000: not just those that concern proof of discrimination under McDonnell Douglas.
140 Id. at 5–6.
141 Id. at 7–8.
144 Id.
reasons similarly conclude that employers proffer reasons generally related to employee performance or conduct or to economic conditions.  

In peremptory challenges, prosecutors, just like employers, offer nondiscriminatory reasons that they hope courts will find persuasive. Rather than personnel decisions, prosecutors are attempting to justify strategic decisions. Therefore, while employers hope to persuade courts with reasons relating to their business, prosecutors hope to persuade courts with reasons relating to jurors’ likelihood of voting for the prosecution or defense.

Unlike employment cases, however, where courts expect business-related reasons, courts do not have clear expectations for what sort of reasons are strategic. In Batson, the Supreme Court suggested that it would find a variety of categories of reason persuasive, asserting that whether a juror has “an open mind about the case,” may depend on “age, education, employment, and economic status.” Initially the Court limited the reasons that prosecutors could assert within these categories to reasons “related to the particular case to be tried.” In the cases following Batson, the Court has removed this limit, and suggested that there are no limits, stating that any facially nondiscriminatory reason will suffice.

2. Information v. Hunch

When making personnel decisions, employers generally have a wealth of information about the performance and compliance of employees and the financial situation of the company. When offering nondiscriminatory reasons, courts require employers to produce some of this information to justify their reasons. While in McDonnell Douglas, the Court stated that at the second step, employers must “articulate” a nondiscriminatory reason, the Court has since clarified that employers have a burden of production, which they must meet “through the

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147 C. Geoffrey Weirich, et al., 2002 CUMULATIVE SUPPLEMENT TO BARBARA T. LINDEMANN & PAUL GROSSMAN, EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION LAW 22–25 (3d. ed. 1996) (categorizing employer reasons according to “misconduct, the need to eliminate jobs, other economic factors, poor work performance, personality factors, being overqualified for the job, attendance, inadequate or lesser qualifications, lesser work performance, or a combination of such factors”).

148 See 476 U.S. at 89 n.12 ("Prior to voir dire examination . . . lawyers wish to know as much as possible about prospective jurors, including their age, education, employment, and economic status, so that they can ensure selection of jurors who at least have an open mind about the case.").

149 Id. at 98.

150 See supra notes 99–100 and accompanying text (summarizing the low burden at the second step of the McDonnell Douglas framework).

151 411 U.S. 792, 802 (1973).

introduction of admissible evidence." LSU, for instance, offered evidence through documentation of its tenure policy and Dr. Mbarika’s performance reviews and through depositions of the faculty who made the tenure decision.

The evidence offered by LSU was more than was necessary to meet a burden of production. LSU, like other employers, was incentivized to present additional evidence so as to persuade the court that its actions were not motivated by discrimination and that it was therefore entitled to summary judgment.

In the peremptory challenge context, the McDonnell Douglas framework is used during voir dire and not during motion practice, so the prosecution does not formally offer evidence. Instead, prosecutors’ burden at the second step has remained one of articulation: Prosecutors need only “offer” a nondiscriminatory reason for their challenge.

Prosecutors generally have little evidence available to justify these reasons. Unlike cases about employee promotion or termination—hiring cases may bear a closer resemblance to peremptory challenges—where employees have track records of performance, substantiated by personnel files and witness testimony, prospective jurors have contact with attorneys only

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153 Id.
154 See supra Part II.A.1 (summarizing Mbarika).
155 See Burdine, 450 U.S. at 258 (“[A]lthough the defendant does not bear a formal burden of persuasion, the defendant nevertheless retains an incentive to persuade the trier of fact that the employment decision was lawful.”); see also Kenneth Bello, Jon W. Green & Bruce Harrison, in CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE: MEASUREMENT OF DISCRIMINATION IN AMERICA 111, 120 (Michael Fix & Raymond J. Struyk eds., 1993) (advising employers to introduce evidence in summary judgment motions to show courts that there is no genuine issue of fact concerning discriminatory intent).
156 See FED. R. CIV. PRO. 56(a) (“The court shall grant summary judgment if the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.”); id. at 56(c)(1)(A) (listing the evidence a movant may cite to meet the burden for summary judgment); see also Malamud, supra note 59, at 2276 (finding courts increasingly use the McDonnell Douglas framework for summary judgment analysis).
158 Employers often make hiring decisions based only on brief interviews or applications. Given this limited information and the subjectivity of the decisions, the employment literature has noted applicants’ difficulty in proving pretext. See Michael Fix, George C. Galster & Raymond J. Struyk, An Overview of Auditing for Discrimination, in CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE, supra note 155, at 1, 14 (“Contact between the applicant and the employer during the hiring process is typically fleeting, the eventual outcome is unknown to the candidate, and the process itself rarely signals exclusionary intent.”); Naomi Schoenbaum, It’s Time that You Know: The Shortcomings of Ignorance as Fairness in Employment Law and the Need for an “Information-Shifting” Model, 30 HARV. J.L. & GENDER 99, 100 (2007) (“B]ecause hiring decisions are often quite subjective, hiring discrimination claims can be some of the most difficult cases to prove.”); see also John J. Donohue III & Peter Siegelman, The Changing Nature of Employment Discrimination Litigation, 43 STAN. L. REV. 983, 1015 (1991) (“Hiring charges outnumbered termination charges by 50 percent in 1966, but by 1985, the ratio had reversed by more than 6 to 1.”).
during voir dire.\textsuperscript{159} Often attorneys cannot even speak with the veniremembers because the voir dire is conducted by the judge.\textsuperscript{160}

Any statements given by veniremembers are also likely brief\textsuperscript{161} and may even be nonverbal. Often a juror may indicate a belief merely by raising (or not raising) a hand in response to a yes-or-no question posed to the entire panel.\textsuperscript{162} Because of this paucity of information, prosecutors must predict juror voting tendencies based on limited characteristics, such as age, education, occupation, appearance, demeanor, marital status, and prior contact with the criminal justice system.\textsuperscript{163}

Prosecutors may not even have clear information on these limited characteristics because any observations they make are subject to multiple interpretations. For instance, in Jacobs, the prosecution claimed veniremember Auzenne avoided eye contact and used a

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\textsuperscript{159} Previous literature has also noted that in contrast with employees, defendants have little evidence available to prove discrimination. See Malamud, supra note 59, at 2302 n.239 (distinguishing Batson challenges from employment suits with pleadings, discovery, and pretrial memoranda); Lisa M. Cox, Note, The “Tainted Decision-Making Approach”: A Solution for the Mixed Messages Batson Gets from Employment Discrimination, 56 CASE W. RES. L. REV. 769, 797 (2006) (“Batson claims can only be proven with transcripts of questions, the racial composition of the petit jury and the prosecutor’s feeble excuses for striking juror. Employment discrimination claims involve witness testimony, examination of the employer’s prior personnel decisions, the plaintiff’s testimony, [and] the plaintiff’s personnel file . . . .”); David A. Sutphen, Note, True Lies: The Role of Pretext Evidence under Batson v. Kentucky in the Wake of St. Mary’s Honor Center v. Hicks, 94 Mich. L. Rev. 488, 507 (1995) (“The issues raised in Batson hearings do not require the parties to conduct depositions and interrogatories, read lengthy evidentiary records or hear from a multitude of witnesses.”).

\textsuperscript{160} See Leonard L. Cavise, The Batson Doctrine: The Supreme Court’s Utter Failure to Meet the Challenge of Discrimination in Jury Selection, 1999 Wis. L. Rev. 501, 545 (1999) (concluding that the Batson doctrine developed at the same time as the trend of judges limiting lawyer questioning or conducting voir dire entirely by themselves); see also GREGORY E. MIZE, PAULA HANNAFORD-AGOR & NICOLE L. WATERS, THE STATE-OF-THE-STATES SURVEY OF JURY IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS: A COMPREHEND REPORT app. E at 79 (2007) (providing, based on state-by-state survey, a measure of the extent to which voir dire is controlled by the presiding judge).

\textsuperscript{161} See Cavise, supra note 160, at 546 (“In the interest of time, most judges will ask as few questions as possible, and ask them in a “closed” manner that encourages a one-word response.”). The length of voir dire varies considerable by state, but a recent survey indicates that for felony trials, the total time used for voir dire in most states is between one and two hours. See MIZE et al., supra note 160, at app. E at 77 (charting voir dire times by state).

\textsuperscript{162} See MIZE et al, supra note 160, at 28 tbl.22 (finding the vast majority of judges and lawyers surveyed reported that some voir dire questions were posed to the full panel with veniremembers indicating responses though a show of hands).

peremptory challenge on her, likely assuming that lack of eye contact meant hostility. But lack of eye contact could also signify deference or introversion, or could just be a product of happenstance.

Based on their brief responses during voir dire, prospective jurors that exhibit clear bias will be excused for cause. Accordingly, prosecutors must determine which facially impartial veniremembers might cast an unfavorable vote. Because of this paucity of information, peremptory challenges, as noted in Supreme Court opinions, are often made based on “hunch” or “instinct.”

C. Differences Prevent Defendants from Proving Pretext

Judicial conceptions of prosecutors’ decisions as strategic choices made based on hunches effectively prevent defendants from proving pretext in the ways that employees do. Employees attempt to demonstrate pretext by arguing that an employer’s proffered nondiscriminatory reason does not accurately describe their characteristics or conduct, is not a plausible explanation for the adverse employment action, or has been applied differently to

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164 See supra note 129 and accompanying text.

165 See generally Page, supra note 63, at 176 n.94 ("[T]he limited information will be processed subjectively. It is legitimate to strike a venire person who is actually hostile towards the striking attorney. It may be difficult, however, to judge what set of behaviors constitute hostility . . . .").

166 See supra supra note 22 (providing an overview of challenges for cause).

167 The limited information available to prosecutors may also mean that they are more likely to discriminate; they will challenge veniremembers based on race or sex because they have little other information about which to base challenges. Scholars have used a similar argument to argue that employers are more likely to discriminate in hiring decision than in promotion or termination decisions. See David A. Strauss, The Law and Economics of Racial Discrimination in Employment: The Case for Numerical Standards, 79 GEO. L.J. 1619, 1622, 1647 (1991) ("[S]tatistical discrimination—discrimination based on a hypothesized correlation between minority status and employee performance—is most likely to occur in hiring because information about employees is ordinarily much easier to acquire than information about applicants, and it is a lack of information that makes statistical discrimination rational."); Scott A. Moss & Daniel A. Malin, Note, Public Funding for Disability Accommodations: A Rational Solution to Rational Discrimination and the Disabilities of the ADA, 33 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 197, 202 (1998) (”Employers often can discern a worker’s productivity only to a very limited extent before the worker begins the job . . . . But where an observable, immutable trait like race or disability correlates to a less observable negative trait, rational actors use the observable trait as a proxy for the negative trait.”).

168 J.E.B. v. Alabama, 511 U.S. 127, 148 (1994) (“[A] trial lawyer’s judgments about a juror’s sympathies are sometimes based on experienced hunches and educated guesses, derived from a juror’s responses at voir dire or a juror’s ‘bare looks and gestures.’”) (O’Connor, J., concurring) (citations omitted); Batson v. Kentucky, 476 U.S. 79, 123 (1986) (“[I]n making peremptory challenges, both the prosecutor and defense attorney necessarily act on only limited information or hunch.”) (Burger, C.J., dissenting).

minority and nonminority employees. The Supreme Court used these factors, among others, to find that the prosecution had discriminated in Miller-El and Snyder. An examination of Jacobs, and the peremptory challenge case law more generally, however, reveals that these methods are not well suited for defendants trying to show that prosecutors’ reasons are pretextual.

1. Defendants Generally Cannot Prove Reasons are Inaccurate

Employees can argue that an employer’s reason is pretextual by showing that the evidence proffered by the employer is inaccurate. Dr. Mbarika, for instance, in rebutting LSU’s contention that his scholarship did not meet its standards, argued that the performance evaluations introduced by LSU did not recognize his articles in the publication process of top journals. Dr. Mbarika also suggested that LSU had erred in its characterization of some of the journals in which he published.

Analogous arguments, however, are generally unavailable to defendants in peremptory challenges. When prosecutors challenge prospective jurors, the only information they often have is statements and observations of veniremembers during voir dire. If prosecutors explain their challenges based on a veniremember’s statements, the accuracy of these explanations is likely irrefutable. As the court asserted in Jacobs, once the prosecutor challenged

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170 See Krieger, supra note 63, at 1180 (finding employees prove disparate treatment by presenting evidence that an employer’s reason was not factually accurate or had been differentially applied); Charles A. Sullivan, Accounting for Price Waterhouse: Proving Disparate Treatment Under Title VII, 56 BROOK. L. REV. 1107, 1159 (1991) (“Typically, though not exclusively, pretext is shown by proving that the supposed reasons . . . were not true when applied to [the plaintiff], or that such reasons existed for [employees of other groups who did not suffer similar adverse actions].”); see, e.g., Reeves v. Sanderson Plumbing Prods., Inc., 530 U.S. 133, 144–45 (2000) (finding that the employee made a substantial showing that the employer’s explanation was false by presenting evidence contradicting the employer’s claim that the employee had falsified company records); McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green, 411 U.S. 792, 804 (1973) (“Especially relevant . . . would be evidence that white employees involved in acts against petitioner of comparable seriousness . . . were nevertheless retained or rehired. Petitioner may justifiably refuse to rehire one who was engaged in unlawful, disruptive acts against it, but only if this criterion is applied alike to members of all races.”). See notes 186–193 for a discussion of plausibility analysis in employment cases.

171 See supra notes 88–93 (discussing the factors used by the Supreme Court in Miller-El and Snyder).

172 See supra note 118 and accompanying text.

173 See Mbarika v. Bd. of Supervisors, 992 So.2d 551, 560 (La. Ct. App. 2008) (analyzing Dr. Mbarika’s argument that LSU ranked journals so as to keep his publications from appearing in top tiers).

174 See supra Part II.B.2 (describing the limited information available to prosecutors).

175 In Miller-El, the defendant could refute the accuracy of the prosecution’s reason because a prosecutor mischaracterized a statement that a veniremember made on the record. See 545 U.S. 231, 242–44 (finding that the prosecutor asserted that a veniremember would only vote for that death penalty if rehabilitation
veniremember Jordan because of his employment at a casino, “[n]o amount of questioning would have elicited the response that Mr. Jordan did not work at a casino.”

Defendants can theoretically refute the accuracy of reasons based on prosecutors’ observations. Unlike employers, however, who must offer evidence to demonstrate their reasons—which employees can attempt to show is inaccurate—prosecutors need only state their reasons. When prosecutors offer recollections to support challenges, defendants have no way to show that the recollections are false. For instance, when the prosecutor in Jacobs asserted that he struck veniremember Auzenne, in part, for lack of eye contact, the defendant could not show that Ms. Auzenne had made eye contact: There is not likely to be objective evidence of jurors’ demeanors.

Judges presiding over voir dire might be able to corroborate or contradict prosecutorial assertions about demeanor. But it seems unlikely that judges will have clear memories about such things as eye contact. Furthermore, because at the third step of the McDonnell Douglas analysis, the judge must determine the prosecutor’s intent, the ultimate question is not the accuracy of a given explanation, but its genuineness, whether a prosecutor believes that a juror was struck for the proffered nondiscriminatory reason.

was impossible even though the veniremember stated that he could impose the death penalty even if rehabilitation was possible).

176 32 So.3d 227, 235 (La. 2010). Employers can also assert reasons that cannot be proven inaccurate. See Martin J. Katz, Reclaiming McDonnell Douglas, 83 Notre Dame L. Rev. 109, 178 (2007) (“McDonnell Douglas only works where the defendant’s proffered reason is false (and thus susceptible to inferences of lying, cover-up, and discrimination). It will not work where the defendant’s proffered reason is true—even where that reason did not in fact motivate the defendant.”); see also Riordan v. Kempiners, 831 F.2d 690, 698 (7th Cir. 1987) (“[I]t is so easy to concoct a plausible reason for not hiring, or firing, or failing to promote, or denying a pay raise to, a worker who is not superlative.”). In asserting cover-ups, however, employers are limited by the judicial emphasis on business related reasons, see supra Part II.B.1 and by their burden of production, see supra notes 152–154, which requires that they provide evidence for any proffered reason. See St. Mary’s Honor Ctr. v. Hicks, 509 U.S. 502, 513–14 (1993) (emphasizing that the employer, because it had terminated the manager who had terminated the plaintiff, would have to “confirm [its nondiscriminatory explanation] out of the mouth of its now antagonistic former employee”); Cox, supra note 159, at 793 (“[I]t is easier to present a subjective reason for a peremptory challenge . . . than it would be to include false reports in a personnel file and persuade other employees to perjure themselves to make an employment decision appear legitimate.”).

177 See supra Part III.B.2.

178 See supra note 129 and accompanying text.

Given judicial recognition that when making challenges, prosecutors act on speculation, defendants are unlikely to be able to refute prosecutors’ beliefs in their recollections. In Jacobs, even though the judge did not recall that Mr. Jordan was wearing shorts and did not interpret Mr. Jordan’s speech pattern as an impediment, the defense could not disprove that the prosecutor believed he had observed these things. Other courts have upheld strikes based on prosecutors’ conjectures: crediting, for example, prosecutors’ assertions about veniremembers’ language difficulty based on country of origin or accent; speculation about familial relationships based on last name; and recollections about jurors’ statements, despite no on-the-record support.

2. Defendants Generally Cannot Prove Reasons Are Implausible

Employees can also prove pretext by showing that employers’ proffered reasons are implausible. Employees argue that a reason, while business-related, does not justify the

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180 See supra notes 168–169 and accompanying text.


182 See Brief for Defendant at 16, State v. Jacobs, 13 So.3d 677 (No. 07-KA-887) (2009) (quoting the judge who in denying the Batson challenge remarked that he thought Mr. Jordan’s hesitation indicated shyness, but that it could have been caused by a speech impediment).

183 See U.S. v. McKoy, 129 Fed. App’x 815, 821–22 (4th Cir. 2005) (upholding a challenge in part because of a conjecture that a veniremember with a Jamaican accent could have difficulty understanding witnesses with Spanish accents); U.S. v. Canoy, 38 F.3d 893, 898 (7th Cir. 1994) (upholding a challenge based on the prosecutor’s inference that because a veniremember was educated outside of the U.S., he would have difficulty understanding English even though the veniremember did not demonstrate any such difficulty during voir dire); People v. Jurado, 131 P.3d 400, 423 (Cal. 2006) (finding that a difficulty understanding English can be inferred from a veniremember’s birth in the Philippines). Failure to question a veniremember about English-language ability has also, however, been found to be evidence of pretext. Diomampo v. State, 185 P.3d 1031, 1038 (Nev. 2008); see also U.S. v. Changco, 1 F.3d 837, 840 (9th Cir. 1993) (“So long as the prosecutor . . . can convince the district court that the potential juror who is being struck in fact has difficulty with English, the justification is race-neutral.”). Courts have also found English language deficiency to be a pretextual reason when voir dire reveals a veniremember’s ability to speak and understand the language. See, e.g., Diomampo, 185 P.3d at 1037–38; State v. Sherman, 1995 WL 118917, No. C1-94-1247, at *2 (Minn. Ct. App. Mar. 21, 1995).

184 Jackson v. State, 5 So.3d 1144, 1150 (Miss. Ct. App. 2008) (King, C.J., concurring) (criticizing the prosecution for striking a prospective juror based on sharing a last name with someone who had been arrested without asking the juror if he was related to such person).

185 Scott v. State, 2007 WL 1059039, No. 04-06-00028-CR, at *2 (Tex. Ct. App. Apr. 11, 2007) (finding that although the record did not contain a given statement, the prosecution’s notes indicated that the given veniremember had spoken and that a challenge based on a good-faith, but mistaken belief, is not discriminatory).

186 See, e.g., Fuentes v. Perskie, 32 F.3d 759, 765 (3d Cir. 1994) (“[T]he non-moving plaintiff [to survive summary judgment] must demonstrate such weaknesses, implausibilities, inconsistencies, incoherencies, or contradictions in the employer’s proffered legitimate reasons for its action that a reasonable factfinder could rationally find them ‘unworthy of credence’ . . . .”) (citation omitted).
adverse action. Courts do not use their own business judgment to second guess the sensibility of employers’ decisions, but the Supreme Court has noted that “[i]dentifiable qualifications for a single job provide a common standard by which to assess each employee.” Accordingly, when an employee brings a discrimination claim, courts can analyze employers’ job descriptions and personnel criteria to see if they are consistent with the action taken against the plaintiff employee.

Dr. Mbarika, for instance, suggested that lack of top-tier publications could not explain LSU’s failure to grant him tenure, given the quantity of articles that he published. Dr. Mbarika’s argument was unsuccessful because LSU’s tenure criteria showed the plausibility of its reason; at hiring, Dr. Mbarika was provided with the tenure policy, dictating that decisions would be made, in part, based on publication in leading journals. When employers’ internal criteria do not explain their decisions, employees can prove pretext, showing, for instance, that an employer did not follow its hiring policies, could not justify its employee ratings, or terminated an employee for a mistake that, at the time, a company executive had characterized as “a minor matter.”

In the peremptory challenge context, defendants also try to prove the implausibility of the prosecution’s proffered reasons. The Supreme Court has found that “implausible or fantastic” explanations for challenges will likely be found to be pretexts, and in Snyder, the Court questioned the plausibility of the prosecution’s conjecture that a student-teacher would

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187 See, e.g., Hartley v. Wis. Bell, Inc., 124 F.3d 887, 890 (7th Cir. 1997) (“Plaintiffs lose if the company honestly believed in the nondiscriminatory reasons it offered, even if the reasons are foolish or trivial or even baseless.”); Fuentes, 32 F.3d at 765 (“[T]he factual dispute at issue is whether discriminatory animus motivated the employer, not whether the employer is wise, shrewd, prudent, or competent.”).


189 See supra note 118 (summarizing Mbarika’s arguments that he had published more articles than had a white candidate who was reappointed).

190 See supra note 116.

191 Tomasso v. Boeing Co., 445 F.3d 702, 709–10 (3d Cir. 2006) (reversing summary judgment, in part, by finding that the employer did not explain the reason for some of the employee’s low ratings).

192 Santiago-Ramos v. Centennial P.R. Wireless Corp., 217 F.3d 46, 56 (1st Cir. 2000) (reversing summary judgment, in part, because a factfinder could conclude that the employer’s reason was implausible given a comment by the vice president at the time the employee supposedly made the error).

193 Purkett v. Elem, 514 U.S. 765, 768 (1995); see also Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322, 339 (2003) (“Credibility [of a prosecutor] can be measured by . . . how reasonable, or how improbable, the explanations are; and by whether the proffered rationale has some basis in accepted trial strategy.”).
find the defendant guilty of a lesser-included offense so as to speed deliberations and return to the classroom. But whereas, in employment cases, courts can examine employer policies and practices to determine plausibility, courts, as noted by Justice Marshall, do not have clear standards by which to assess prosecutor explanations. District attorneys’ offices do not share jury-picking standards with courts, and courts, recognizing that prosecutors must make guesses based on limited information, do not impose standards on prosecutors’ strategies.

Courts do not require that prosecutors demonstrate that the characteristics that they offer as nondiscriminatory reasons actually relate to a veniremember’s voting proclivity. The Supreme Court, in Miller-El, found that the prosecution’s failure to question a veniremember about a proffered reason casts doubt on the reason, but, as this was just one factor among many in the Court’s decision, lowers courts do not generally find that failure to question demonstrates that a reason is pretextual. In Jacobs, the prosecutor asserted that he struck veniremember Jordan in part for working at a casino, arguing that law-abiding citizens should not take part in some activities that occur at casinos. But the prosecutor did not question Mr. Jordan about his morals and presented no evidence showing that casino workers are less likely to be law abiding or more likely to side with defendants. In striking veniremember Stevenson, the prosecutor never questioned her to see if her Sunday school teaching or relatives in jail revealed an anti-state bias and never presented any evidence that people with these characteristics have such biases. Similarly, when giving reasons, such as age, vocation, or

195 See supra note 89.

196 See denying cert. to Wilkerson v. Texas, 493 U.S. 924, 927 (U.S. 1989) (Marshall, J., dissenting) (“[A] factfinder can assess the employer’s faithfulness to its own nonracial criteria by examining whether the particular white candidate’s qualifications, as defined by the criteria, were superior to those of the Afro-American candidate. In the Batson context, though, the criteria underlying a prosecutor’s peremptory challenges are private . . . .”).

197 See supra Part II.B.2.

198 See supra note 88 and accompanying text.

199 See supra notes 88–93 and accompanying text (discussing factors considered by the Court in Miller-El and Snyder).

200 State v. Jacobs, 32 So.3d 227, 234 (La. 2010).


202 Brief for Defendant at 17, supra note 182.

203 See, e.g., People v. Lomax, 234 P.3d 377, 413 (Cal. 2010) (finding it was not unreasonable for the prosecution to believe that a young person would impose a more lenient sentence); State v. Martin, 683 N.W.2d 399, 403–05 (S.D. 2004) (upholding the trial court’s determination that a strike of a veniremember, in part, for being seventy-one years old was not “without a logical perception on the part of the state.”).
dress, prosecutors generally do not need to present evidence that the given juror is biased or that jurors with those characteristics generally have biases.

Courts also do not require prosecutors to show that their reasons are related to the case being tried. The prosecutor in Jacobs implied that Mr. Jordan’s employment in a casino could be connected to unsavory activities—perhaps gambling or organized crime. But the trial involved a sixteen-year-old alleged to have shot a man and the man’s mother; it is unclear how Mr. Jordan’s employment suggested an affinity for such a defendant. It is also unclear how veniremember Stevenson’s prior service on a jury that found for a plaintiff would have any connection to the facts of Jacobs. Similarly, in cases where prosecutors strike jurors based on insufficient education, they are not required to show that the facts presented at trial will be complex.

Courts also do not limit where within a given category jurors’ characteristics must fall. In employment cases, by contrast, courts expect employers to take action only if employees exhibit a behavior in a certain direction. For instance, no matter what type of job an employee has or what type of business an employer engages in, if performance is offered as an explanation, an employee must have performed poorly. Ruling on Batson challenges, however,

204 See, e.g., State v. Martinez, 2009 WL 3165489, No. 1 CA-CR 08-0144, at *2–3 (Az. Ct. App. Oct. 1, 2009) (upholding the challenge of an engineer based on the prosecutor’s supposition, for which he offered no support, that “engineers are of a special breed”); People v. Reynoso, 74 P.3d 852, 924–25 (Cal. 2003) (upholding a challenge even though the record did not show the customer service representative’s hypothesized lack of education and the prosecutor did not show that the representative was likely to favor the defense); Jackson v. State. 5 So.3d 1144, 1148–49 (Miss. Ct. App. 2008) (finding that the prosecutor was not required to explain why a parochial school teacher would favor defendant).

205 In Jacobs, the prosecutor did not question veniremember Jordan about his shorts or explain why his shorts would impact his decisionmaking. 13 So.3d at 694. Similarly, In Jackson v. State, the court upheld the prosecutions’ strike of a veniremember with dyed-red hair because this, in the judge’s opinion, could indicate the veniremember was “out of synch with society or something” even though the veniremember was an engineer, Brief of the Appellant at 16, Jackson, 5 So.3d 1144 (No. 2007-KA-01782-COA), and the prosecutor presented no evidence of such a connection, 5 So.3d 1144, 1149 (Miss. Ct. App 2008).

206 Some courts consider whether there is a relationship between the reason and the case, although they do not require that the prosecution actually demonstrate a relationship. See, e.g., Ex Parte Branch, 526 So.2d 609, 624 (Ala. 1987); Slappy v. State, 503 So.2d 350, 355 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 1987); State v. Parker, 836 S.W.2d 930, 940 (Mo. 1992); Manning v. State, 765 So.2d 516, 519 (Miss. 2000); People v. Ritchie, 217 A.D.2d 84, 89 (N.Y. App. Div. 1995); Brumfield v. Exxon Corp., 63 S.W.3d 912, 917 (Tex. Ct. App. 2002).


208 See supra note 129 and accompanying text.

209 See, e.g., Jackson, 5 So.3d at 1145–47 (upholding the peremptory challenge of a veniremember with a twelfth grade education, in a trial for a restaurant hold-up, based on the prosecutor’s reason of selecting a highly educated jury).
courts have accepted that prospective jurors were struck for being too old or too young, too vocal or too passive, too educated or too uneducated, for being single or because of a marital relationship, and for having been accused of a crime or having been a victim of a crime.

Prosecutors also strike prospective jurors for having no job or for the jobs at which they are employed. In *Jacobs*, the prosecution struck veniremembers, in part, for working in a casino and having worked in the district attorney’s office. Other courts have upheld challenges based in part on employment as a teacher, postal worker, and engineer. Similarly, courts uphold challenges based on all sorts of

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210 See, e.g., People v. Jurado, 131 P.3d 400, 423 (Cal. 2006); State v. Myers, 603 N.W.2d 378, 386 (Neb. 1999); State v. Martin, 683 N.W.2d 399, 403–05 (S.D. 2004).

211 See, e.g., People v. Lomax, 234 P.3d 377, 413 (Cal. 2010); Walker v. State, 640 S.E.2d 274, 277 (Ga. 2007); *Myers*, 603 N.W.2d at 386.


214 See, e.g., *State v. Williams*, 922 S.W.2d 845, 850 (Mo. Ct. App. 1996); People v. Gaston, 628 N.E.2d 699, 701 (Ill. App. Ct. 1993); *see also People v. Reynoso*, 74 P.3d 852, 925 n.6 (Cal. 2003) (“[A]n attorney could peremptorily excuse a potential juror because he or she feels the potential juror’s occupation reflects too much education . . . .”).


216 See, e.g., People v. Hamilton, 200 P.3d 898, 933 (Cal. 2009); Roberts v. State, 651 S.E.2d 689, 693–94 (Ga. 2007); *Pitchford v. State*, 45 So.3d 216, 226 (Miss. 2010).


221 See supra note 129 and accompanying text.


appearances. The court in *Jacobs* upheld the prosecutor’s challenge of veniremember Jordan in part for his shorts; other courts have upheld challenges based in part on dyed-red hair, earrings, a large hat and sunglasses, a T-shirt, and an unbuttoned flannel shirt. The legal literature is full of many more examples of the varied reasons accepted by courts.

Defendants may argue that a reason is implausible because, if anything, it seems to suggest that a veniremember would be sympathetic to the prosecution. But unlike employment cases, where certain characteristics, such as high performance, are clearly ideal for employers, there is no standard for what makes a juror ideal. In *Jacobs*, the prosecutor argued, and the court did not dispute that, rather than making them desirable, Ms. Auzenne’s past employment with the district attorney’s office and Ms. Florence’s status as a victim in another case, prejudiced them against the prosecution.

Even if a court recognizes that some characteristics suggest that a veniremember would favor the state, the prosecution can still base a challenge on other characteristics. For example, besides pointing to Ms. Auzenne’s former employment, the *Jacobs* prosecution asserted two other reasons for her challenge. Finding that the defendant did not prove that these reasons were pretextual, the court upheld the challenge. Other courts similarly uphold challenges of

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226 See supra note 129 and accompanying text.


230 Cook v. LaMarque, 593 F.3d 810, 819–20 (9th Cir. 2010).

231 People v. Cruz, 187 P.3d 970, 988–91 (Cal. 2008).


233 The Supreme Court has indicated that the fact that a struck juror would seem ideal for the prosecution suggests discrimination. Miller-El v. Dretke, 545 U.S. 231, 265 (U.S. 2005).

234 See supra notes 128–129 and accompanying text. The prosecution offered a similar counterintuitive argument in State v. Pona, 926 A.2d 592, 600 (R.I. 2007), arguing that a veniremember with brothers in the police department was likely to side with the defense in order to contradict the assumption that she would be pro-state. The court upheld the challenge. See infra note 237 (noting that the challenge was upheld based on a different reason given by the prosecution).

235 Prosecutors would be wise to assert all the reasons for their challenges together. In *Miller-El*, after the defense contested one reason, the prosecution asserted an additional reason. The Court found this “reek[ed] of afterthought.” 545 U.S. 231, 246 (2005).

236 32 So.3d at 234.
seemingly ideal minority veniremembers by finding that prosecutors articulated nondiscriminatory reasons that the defense did not disprove.237

As asserted by Justice Marshall, “[a]ny prosecutor can easily assert facially neutral reasons for striking a juror.”238 Since many of these facially neutral reasons are assertions about veniremembers’ statements or appearances, defendants are not often able to show that they are inaccurate,239 and because courts have broad conceptions of acceptable jury-picking strategies, defendants generally are not able to show that the reasons are implausible.

3. Defendants Generally Cannot Prove Reasons also Apply to Unchallenged Jurors

The multitude of reasons available to prosecutors also can prevent defendants from proving pretext by showing that a given reason has been differentially applied. While the Supreme Court, in Miller-El and Snyder, compared minority veniremembers who the prosecution challenged with white veniremembers who the prosecution accepted in order to show discrimination,240 the prosecution can avoid these comparisons by offering reasons that are unlikely to apply to other veniremembers. Highlighting this difficulty, in upholding the prosecution’s challenge of Mr. Jordan based on his employment at a casino, the Jacobs court emphasized that there were no jurors with similar jobs.241

Prosecutors also can prevent defendants from finding a comparable white veniremember by explaining challenges with multiple nondiscriminatory reasons. Courts have generally held that “where a party gives multiple reasons for striking a juror, it is not enough for the other side to assert that the empanelled juror shares one attribute with the struck

237 See, e.g., People v. Washington, 2006 WL 3720341, No. A109989, at *9 & n.7 (Cal. Ct. App. Dec. 19, 2006) (finding that a veniremember who was studying criminal justice and considering becoming police officer was not ideal for the prosecution because although the veniremember had past positive experiences with the police, the veniremember also had past negative experiences with the police); State v. Hoffman, 768 So.2d 542, 557–59 (La. 2000) (finding that a veniremember with relatives in law enforcement and who had previously served on jury that returned a guilty verdict was not ideal for the prosecution given the prosecution’s interpretation of the veniremember’s answers during voir dire); State v. Pona, 926 A.2d 592, 600–09 (R.I. 2007) (upholding a strike of a veniremember with police officer brothers based on the prosecution’s observation of the veniremember’s demeanor); Scott v. State, 2007 WL 1059039, No. 1059039, at *2 (Tex. Ct. App. Apr. 11, 2007) (rejecting the defendant’s contention that a veniremember employed by the state was ideal for the prosecution because of a statement the prosecution alleged the veniremember to have made but which was not confirmed in the record).


239 See supra Part II.C.1.

240 See supra note 90 and accompanying text.

241 32 So.3d 227, 235 (La. 2010).
In Miller-El, however, the Supreme Court made clear that even if unchallenged white veniremembers do not have the precise mix of characteristics as the challenged minority veniremembers, comparisons can still undercut the legitimacy of proffered reasons.\textsuperscript{243} Nonetheless, while one reason that a prosecutor proffered for striking a minority veniremember may also apply to a white veniremember, this similarity is often insufficient to persuade courts that another reason proffered for the strike of the minority veniremember is pretextual.\textsuperscript{244} As one judge asserted after Miller-El:

While evidence that ‘a prosecutor’s proffered reason for striking a black panelist applies just as well to an otherwise-similar nonblack who is permitted to serve’ tends to prove purposeful discrimination, the prosecution can rebut that evidence by showing that the prosecutor had other non-discriminatory reasons for striking the juror which did not also apply to the empaneled juror.\textsuperscript{245}

In Jacobs, the prosecution struck Ms. Florence in part for having served on a hung jury, but did not strike a white veniremember who had also served on a hung jury. In upholding the challenge, the court found that the comparison did not show the reason to be pretextual because

\textsuperscript{242} Wilson v. Cockrell, 70 Fed. App’x 219, 224 (5th Cir. 2003) (citing Alverio v. Sam’s Warehouse Club, Inc., 253 F.3d 933, 941 (7th Cir. 2001)); see, e.g., U.S. v. Davenport, 1994 WL 523653, No. 93-1216, at *6 (5th Cir. 1994) (finding a comparison of prospective jurors unpersuasive because the defendant did not show that any other juror “had the same combination of factors” that the prosecution had used to justify the strike); Taylor v. State, 620 S.E.2d 363, 366 (Ga. 2005) (“If multiple racially-neutral reasons are given for the peremptory strike of [African-American] potential jurors, a Batson violation does not exist simply because one or more of those racially-neutral reasons was not used by the prosecutor to strike white potential jurors.”) (citations omitted, brackets in original); Berry v. State, 802 So2d 1033, 1040 (Miss. 2001) (“[T]he fact that other jurors may have some of the individual characteristics of the challenged juror does not demonstrate that the reasons assigned are pretextual.”); Cantu v. State, 842 S.W.2d 667, 689 (Tex. Crim. App. 1992) (“Where . . . the State has offered numerous race neutral reasons for its challenge, we cannot say that the fact that there were other acceptable jurors possessing one or more of these objectionable attributes, is sufficient to establish disparate treatment.”). Employers can also proffer multiple reasons for their decision, but are generally limited to presenting business-related reasons, whereas prosecutors can assert almost any reason. \textit{See supra} Part II.B.1.

\textsuperscript{243} See 545 U.S. 231, 247 n.6 (2005) (“None of our cases announces a rule that no comparison is probative unless the situation of the individuals compared is identical in all respects, and there is no reason to accept one.”).

\textsuperscript{244} See, e.g., People v. Huggins, 131 P.3d 995 (Cal. 2006) (finding that while many of the prosecution’s explanations for challenging minority veniremembers could also apply to white veniremembers who were not challenged, the prosecutor presented additional evidence that the minority veniremembers would not support the death penalty); Densey v. State, 191 S.W.3d 296, 322–25 (Tex. Ct. App. 2006) (finding that although the challenged minority veniremember’s answers to questions concerning rehabilitation were the same as the answers of unchallenged white veniremembers, the prosecution had other reasons for challenging the minorities).

Unlike the white veniremember, Ms. Florence had also been the victim of a crime and been observed sleeping.\textsuperscript{246} Similarly, prosecutors can strike an engineer while seating other jurors with technical backgrounds\textsuperscript{247} and strike a veniremember on the basis of inadequate education while striking other veniremembers with advanced educations.\textsuperscript{248}

In addition to the multitude of reasons available to prosecutors, the ability of defendants to prove pretext by comparing veniremembers is limited by judicial perception of the flexibility of prosecutors’ strategies. The Supreme Court has noted that while employers may look at many variables in assessing employees, “these variables are to a great extent uniform for all employees because they must all have a reasonable relationship to the employee’s qualifications to perform the particular job at issue.”\textsuperscript{249}

In contrast, prosecutors’ preferences may change over the course of voir dire. The Supreme Court has noted that prosecutors may be more willing to use peremptory challenges earlier in voir dire when they have more challenges remaining.\textsuperscript{250} Prosecutors may also not have uniform preferences for each juror: A prosecutor may, for instance, want some jurors who are leaders and some who are followers. Some courts therefore assert that prosecutors’ disparate use of challenges on jurors with the same characteristics does not imply discrimination.\textsuperscript{251}

4. Courts Generally Find Other Factors Cannot Prove Pretext

In addition to the inaccuracy, implausibility or differential application of a prosecutor’s proffered reason, the Supreme Court, in \textit{Miller-El} and \textit{Snyder}, utilized other criteria that can be used to prove pretext, such as the pattern of challenges, the questions asked during voir dire,\textsuperscript{252}

\textsuperscript{246} See \textit{supra} note 128 and accompanying text.


\textsuperscript{248} Jackson v. State, 5 So.3d 1144, 1150 (Miss. Ct. App. 2008) (King, C.J., concurring) (“Among the reasons for striking four of the black prospective were that . . . the prosecution wanted a well-educated jury. While desiring a well-educated jury, the prosecution struck (1) a well-educated engineer . . . and (2) a well-educated school teacher . . . .”).


\textsuperscript{251} See Matthews v. Evatt, 105 F.3d 907, 918 (4th Cir. 1997) (quoting Burks v. Borg, 27 F.3d 1424, 1429 (9th Cir. 1994)) (“[C]ounsel is entitled to . . . reevaluate the mix of jurors and the weight he gives to various characteristics as he begins to exhaust his peremptory challenges . . . . ”); \textit{People v. Johnson}, 47 Cal.3d 1194, 1220 (Cal. 1989) (“It may be acceptable, for example, to have one juror with a particular point of view but unacceptable to have more than one with that view . . . . These same considerations apply when considering the age, education, training, employment, prior jury service, and experience of the prospective jurors.”).

\textsuperscript{252} See \textit{supra} notes 91–92 and accompanying text.
and the demeanor of the prosecutors while justifying the challenges. Lower courts consider these factors in making determinations, but generally find that statistics, disparate questioning, and demeanor do not prove that a proffered reason is false.

In Jacobs, the Louisiana Supreme Court analyzed the prosecution’s frequency of challenges against minority and non-minority veniremembers. Finding that the prosecution used eighty-seven percent of its challenges on racial minorities even though the venire was more than eighty-one percent white, the court asserted that from “a purely statistical standpoint,” the disparity could not be explained by chance. But the court found that it did not have to rely on statistics because it had already assessed the reasons proffered by the prosecution for the challenges and found them to be nondiscriminatory.

The court’s logic is revealed in the organization of its opinion. The initial sections are labeled by the names of veniremembers. In each of these sections, the court addressed the reasons proffered for the strikes of the given veniremember and found that the defendant had not been able to prove that they were pretextual. The opinion’s final section is devoted to the “statistical argument.” Other courts employ similar logic, separately addressing the reasons proffered by the prosecution and the statistics of the prosecution’s challenges, then concluding that mere statistics do not prove pretext.

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254 Professor Michael J. Zimmer, Slicing & Dicing of Individual Disparate Treatment, 61 LA. L. REV. 577 (2001), has made a related critique for employment cases, arguing that courts discount the probative value of individual pieces of evidence favorable to employees when awarding employers summary judgment and judgment as a matter of law.

255 32 So.3d 227, 236 (La. 2010).

256 Id. at 236–37.

257 Id. at 229–33 (labeling sections “Eric Hughes,” “Leola Florence,” and “Other prospective jurors”).

258 Id. at 236.

259 See, e.g., State v. Benich, 2008 WL 2641309, No. 1 CA-CR 06-0901 (Ariz. Ct. App. Jan. 10, 2008 ) (rejecting the defendant’s statistical argument because “[d]efendant cites no case . . . in which a Batson challenge was granted based on statistics alone” and then separately addressing whether the defendant proved that the prosecution’s proffered reasons were pretextual); State v. Hugely, 185 S.W.3d 356, 374–75 (Tenn. 2006) (concluding that even though all eight of the prosecution’s challenges were used against African Americans, “[t]hese bare statistics do not, in and of themselves, convince us that the State’s proffered race-neutral reasons for excusing the five named persons were merely pretextual”); Jackson v. State, 2010 WL 1509692, No. 2-09-023-CR, at *8 (Tex. Ct. App. Apr. 15, 2010) (“Although the statistical analysis demonstrates that the State used a disproportionate number of peremptory strikes on African-Americans, our comparative analysis of veniremember 3 demonstrates that the State’s reason for striking her was not pretextual, and our analysis of the State’s remaining strikes on African-American veniremembers does not demonstrate discriminatory intent.”).
The *Jacobs* court’s analysis of the prosecution’s patterns of questioning similarly reflects courts’ failure to find this factor convincing. Like statistics, the court addressed disparate questioning in a separate section after it had concluded that pretext had not been demonstrated for any particular juror.\(^\text{260}\) The defense argued that the prosecution had asked venire panels with minority jurors if they knew anyone in jail, but did not pose this question to a panel that was composed exclusively of white veniremembers.\(^\text{261}\) Knowing that Louisiana courts have accepted a veniremember’s relationship with someone in jail as a nondiscriminatory reason for challenge,\(^\text{262}\) the prosecutor may have asked this question to minority veniremembers in the hope that some would respond affirmatively, providing “ammunition” for challenge.\(^\text{263}\)

The court, however, explained away the disparate questioning. The all-white panel was the final panel, and only a few additional jurors needed to be selected; the court therefore concluded that the failure to fully question them could be motivated by expediency rather than discrimination.\(^\text{264}\) Other courts similarly provide explanations for disparate questioning, attributing the differences to, for example, answers given by jurors,\(^\text{265}\) previous questions asked by the court,\(^\text{266}\) or inadvertent prosecutor error.\(^\text{267}\) These explanations, while not necessarily

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\(^{260}\) 32 So.3d 227, 236 (La. 2010); *see also* Clay v. State, 1996 WL 167930, No. 05-94-01770-CR, at *5 (Tex. Ct. App. April 9, 1996) (dismissing allegations of disparate questioning after having concluded in prior sections of the opinion that the prosecution’s proffered reasons were not pretextual).

\(^{261}\) 32 So.3d at 236.

\(^{262}\) *See id.* at 235 (noting that Louisiana courts have found that having a relative in prison is a nondiscriminatory reason for a challenge).

\(^{263}\) Such a strategy is revealed in excerpts of a training tape for jury selection made by a former Philadelphia assistant district attorney. *See Fear of a Black Jury, Harpers’s Mag.,* July 2000, at 29 (“You want to ask more questions of [African Americans] so that you have more ammunition to make an articulable reason as to why you are not striking them for race.”).

\(^{264}\) 32 So.3d at 236.

\(^{265}\) *See State v. Gray, 150 P.3d 787, 794–95 (Ariz. 2008)* (finding that the prosecutor questioned an African American veniremember more extensively than a white veniremember because the veniremember’s initial answer more likely suggested a negative attitude towards law enforcement); *Bailey v. Commonwealth,* 2005 WL 119619, No. 2002-SC-1090-MR, at *4 (Ky. Jan. 20, 2005) (“The number and intrusiveness of those follow-up questions depended on the initial response from the juror, i.e., jurors who volunteered less information were asked more questions, not the race of the juror.”).

\(^{266}\) People v. Emory, 2009 WL 4680009, No. A122557, at *6 (Cal. Ct. App. Dec. 9, 2009) (“If the prosecutor questioned J.P. more closely than others about his work history, the questions are readily explained by the fact that the court itself asked J.P. few questions on that topic . . . .”).

\(^{267}\) *See Brown v. State, 2010 WL 3612138,* No. CR-07-1332, at *33 (Ala. Crim. App. June 25, 2010) (finding that when the prosecutor stopped a white veniremember from answering a question, claiming—incorrectly—that the veniremember had previously answered it, “it appears that the prosecutor was simply mistaken about the veniremembers’ previous responses”).
inaccurate, reflect the ease with which disparate questioning can be attributed to nondiscriminatory factors. Even when courts acknowledge that disparate questioning may evince a discriminatory intent, they often find that factor, alone, does not prove that the state’s nondiscriminatory reasons are pretextual.268

The Supreme Court has emphasized that the “best evidence” to determine whether a proffered reason is pretextual is often the demeanor of the prosecutor.269 But given that prosecutors become increasingly expert at conducting voir dire in each case that they try, and that they may receive specialized voir dire training,270 it is questionable whether any intent to discriminate or deceive would be revealed by their demeanor. Even if proffering pretextual reasons does affect demeanor, it seems unlikely that judges will be able to reliably identify these effects.271

Even if judges identify aspects of a prosecutor’s demeanor that may imply deception, they may be reluctant to find that prosecutors have acted pretextually. Prosecutors are often repeat-players who have developed trusting relationships with judges.272 Judges may therefore

268 See, e.g., Watkins v. State, 245 S.W.3d 444, 453 (Tex. Crim. App. 2008) (“[W]hile one of the prosecutor’s main lines of questioning seemed suspiciously directed toward African-Americans, the two others manifestly were not. . . . [W]e [cannot] say that this evidence, at least by itself, compels a conclusion that the trial court clearly erred [in not finding pretext].”); State v. Lamon, 664 N.W.2d 607, 627 (Wis. 2003) (“[R]efusal to conduct individualized voir dire of [the veniremember] may be an isolated factor arguably evidencing discriminatory intent. . . . [T]he numerous race-neutral reasons proffered by the State outweigh any alleged discriminatory intent resulting from the failure to question [the veniremember] further.”). Lamon seems to be an especially egregious case. The day before jury selection, the state requested the address of the only African American veniremember, allegedly because his surname, Bell, was a “well known criminal name” in the area. See id. at 803–10 (Abrahamson, C.J., dissenting).


270 See William H. Farmer, Presumed Prejudiced, But Fair?, 63 VAND. L. REV. EN BANC 5, 7 (2010) (“Practitioners throughout the country are trained to learn the preferences and taboos of their local trial courts, state or federal, before conducting voir dire.”); but see John H. Blume, Sheri Lynn Johnson & A. Brian Threlkeld, Probing “Life Disqualification” through Expanded Voir Dire, 29 HOFSTRA L. REV. 1209, 1245–46 (2001) (asserting that lawyers have little training in voir dire).


272 See People v. Coulter, 799 N.E.2d 708, 723 (Ill. App. Ct. 2003) (Campbell, J., dissenting) (quoting a trial judge who in upholding peremptory challenges remarked, “I will never, ever have the pleasure of knowing a more honest person, a person with more integrity [as one of the prosecutors and that the other prosecutor] had the same sort of reputation.”); Ex Parte Branch, 526 So.2d 609, 616 (Ala. 1987) (quoting a trial judge reminding the defense attorney of the experience of the prosecutors and that he “trust[s] these men when they tell [him] something as court officers.”); see also Jose Felipe Anderson, Catch Me If You Can! Resolving the Ethical Tragedy in the Brave New World of Jury Selection, 32 NEW ENG. L. REV. 343, 377
hesitate to find that they are lying based on ambiguous demeanor-based cues. Perhaps, most importantly, judges’ decisions generally turn on defendants’ ability to disprove prosecutors’ proffered reasons; it is unlikely that judges will hold that a prosecutor’s demeanor proves that a proffered reason is false.

This inability to find pretext based on demeanor is magnified at the appellate level. The Supreme Court has recognized that appellate courts have only transcripts so are not “well positioned” to assess prosecutors’ credibility. Trial judges’ findings are therefore accorded “great deference.” The Jacobs court accordingly supposed that the trial judge’s upholding of a peremptory challenge “could have been validly based on the judge’s personal observation of the prosecutor’s demeanor.” In upholding peremptory challenges, other courts similarly assert that they defer to trial judges’ assessment of pretext, despite evidence to the contrary, because of the judges’ ability to assess prosecutors’ demeanor firsthand.

(1998) (“For the lawyer who does not regularly practice before a given court, the risk of making a Batson challenge may be to anger the judge by challenging the integrity of a local lawyer with whom the judge has become familiar and who he may believe to be honest.”).

See Charlow, supra note 64, at 11 (reporting that after finding an explanation was pretextual, a judge “had the uncomfortable feeling that she had just rendered an official ruling that the attorney was lying to the court”); Deana Kim El-Mallaway, Comment, Johnson v. California and the Initial Assessment of Batson Claims, 74 FORDHAM L. REV. 3333, 3355 (2006) (“[T]he trial judge is often in the awkward position of questioning whether a prosecutor, who comes before the judge on a regular basis, is lying to the court”). This situation is less likely to occur in employment cases. See St. Mary’s Honor Ctr. v. Hicks, 509 U.S. 502, 520–21 (1993) (“[T]he defendant is ordinarily not an individual but a company, which must rely upon the statement of an employee . . . . To say that the company which in good faith introduces such testimony . . . . becomes a liar and a perjurer when the testimony is not believed, is nothing short of absurd.”).

See supra Part II.A (discussing judicial focus on proof of pretext).

Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322, 339 (2003); see also United States v. Armstrong, 517 U.S. 456, 468 (1996) (“Because the judge has before him the entire venire, he is well situated to detect whether a challenge to the seating of one juror is part of a ‘pattern’ of singling out members of a single race for peremptory challenges”) (citation omitted). The trial judge is also able to assess veniremembers’ demeanors firsthand, so is better able to assess the credibility of challenges based on veniremembers’ demeanor. Snyder v. Louisiana, 552 U.S. 472, 477 (2008).

Batson v. Kentucky, 476 U.S. 79, 98 n. 21 (1986); see infra notes 300–302 (discussing standards of review).

State v. Jacobs, 32 So.3d 227, 233 (La. 2010).

See, e.g., State v. Benich, 2008 WL 2641309, No. 1 CA-CR 06-0901, at *5 (Ariz. Ct. App. Jan. 10, 2008) (“As pretextual as the prosecutor’s reasons for striking Juror Thirteen may seem based on the written record alone, the trial court is in a much better position to determine the prosecutor’s credibility than we are.”); People v. Johnson, 767 P.2d 1047, 1056 & n.6 (Cal. 1989) (rejecting a strong dissent and noting “[t]he trial judge . . . had almost 10 years of judicial experience . . . . Moreover, trial judges know the local prosecutors assigned to their courts and are in a better position than appellate courts to evaluate the credibility and the genuineness of reasons given for peremptory challenges.”); People v. Dimas, 2011 WL 1227395, No. B223795, at *3-4 (Cal. Ct. App. Apr. 4, 2011) (giving considerable deference to the trial judge
III. FOCUS ON PROVING DISCRIMINATION

As demonstrated in Part II, defendants generally cannot prove pretext, even when courts use the factors articulated by the Supreme Court in Miller-El and Snyder. The Court, however, has provided guidance beyond just the articulation of factors. As discussed in Section A, in employment cases, the Court has prescribed that at the third step of the McDonnell Douglas framework, courts should focus on discrimination rather than on pretext. The Court has not made this shift explicit for peremptory challenge cases. However, Miller-El and Snyder model such an approach, which, as argued in Section B, lower courts should implement to better detect discrimination.

A. Supreme Court Shifts Focus from Pretext to Discrimination in the Employment Context

Courts analyzing peremptory challenges have generally followed the structure of the McDonnell Douglas test to focus on defendants’ ability to prove pretext. However, in employment cases after McDonnell Douglas and Burdine, the Court has clarified that at the third step of the analysis, courts must determine whether an employer discriminated, not whether an employer’s reason was pretextual. In St. Mary’s Honor Center v. Hicks, the Court held that proof that an employer’s proffered reason is pretextual does not necessitate a judgment for the plaintiff. Instead, as clarified by the Court in Reeves v. Sanderson Plumbing Products, “[p]roof that the defendant’s explanation is unworthy of credence is simply one form of circumstantial evidence that is probative of intentional discrimination.”

The Court has not directly stated whether its holdings from Hicks and Reeves apply in the Batson context. In Miller-El and Snyder, the Court suggested that, in contrast with employment cases, proof of pretext is generally sufficient to prove discrimination. Scholars

because of his “knowledge of local conditions and local prosecutors, powers of observation, understanding of trial techniques, and judicial experience” and rejecting the defendant’s Batson claim because the judge “made a sincere and reasoned effort to evaluate the nondiscriminatory justifications offered by the prosecutor.”)

See St. Mary’s Honor Ctr. v. Hicks, 509 U.S. 502, 518–19 (1993) (“Once the defendant ‘responds to the plaintiff’s proof by offering evidence of the reason for the plaintiff’s rejection, the factfinder must then decide’ not . . . whether that evidence is credible, but “whether the rejection was discriminatory . . . .”’). (quoting U.S. Postal Serv. Bd. of Governors v. Aikens, 460 U.S. 711, 714–15 (1983).

Id. at 511.


In Miller-El, the Court suggested that in peremptory challenge cases, proof of pretext tends to prove purposeful discrimination, which contrasts with employment cases where proof of pretext is “simply one form of circumstantial evidence”. Miller-El v. Dretke, 545 U.S. 231, 241 (2005). The Court made the same
have also argued for such a view. Employers’ evidence of nondiscriminatory reasons must necessarily come through the testimony of or the documents produced by individual employees, who may not have full knowledge of the motivations of other agents and may act for self-serving reasons. Disproof of their proffered reasons may therefore not persuade courts that the real reason was discriminatory. But for peremptory challenges, prosecutors give their reasons without intermediary, so if the court does not believe the reasons, discrimination seems a highly likely alternative.

B. Courts Should Shift Focus from Pretext to Discrimination in the Batson Context

While the Court in Miller-El and Snyder declined to adopt the holding from Hicks and Reeves that a finding of pretext does not necessitate a finding of discrimination, the peremptory challenge cases do reflect the employment cases’ holding that pretext is just one way in which discrimination may proven. The Court in Miller-El and Snyder did not find whether the defendant had disproven the prosecution’s proffered reason for any given juror to be dispositive. Instead, the Court determined whether the sum of the prosecution’s actions during voir dire was more likely explained by the proffered reasons or by discrimination. By framing their analysis with statistics, inquiring into the most likely explanation for prosecutorial actions, and focusing on discrimination rather than individual challenges, lower courts should use this Supreme Court model to guide their assessment of peremptory challenges.

1. Frame Analysis with Statistics

In Miller-El, the Court framed its inquiry with the statistics of the prosecution’s challenges. After setting out the facts and procedural posture, the Court began its analysis by asserting, “[t]he numbers describing the prosecution’s use of peremptories are remarkable.”

contrast in Snyder and also cited the plurality statement from Hernandez v. New York that “[i]n the typical peremptory challenge inquiry, the decisive question will be whether counsel’s race-neutral explanation for a peremptory challenge should be believed.”). Snyder v. Louisiana, 552 U.S. 472, 485 (2008) (quoting 500 U.S. quoting 352, 365 (1991)).

283 See David A. Sutphen, Note, True Lies: The Role of Pretext Evidence under Batson v. Kentucky in the Wake of St. Mary’s Honor Center v. Hicks, 94 Mich. L. Rev. 488, 505 (1995) (“[A] company [ ] is forced to rely on the testimony and recollection of various employees regarding their state of mind or the actions and motivations of other employees, all of which makes it extremely difficult specifically to identify the ‘real’ motivation for the adverse employment action.”); see also Hicks, 509 U.S. at 520 (“[A] company [ ] must rely upon the statement of an employee-often a relatively low-level employee-as to the central fact . . . . To say that the company which in good faith introduces such testimony . . . becomes a liar and a perjurer when the testimony is not believed, is nothing short of absurd.”).

284 Cavise, supra note 160, at 539–40; Sutphen, supra note 283, at 505–08.

The Court noted that of the ten black veniremembers who were not excused for cause or by agreement of the parties, nine were peremptorily challenged by the prosecution. In *Jacobs*, the Louisiana Supreme Court also mentioned a statistical disparity—the prosecution used eighty-seven percent of its peremptory challenges on veniremembers of racial minorities, even though such veniremembers made up less than nineteen percent of the venire—but did so at the end of its analysis, when it had already found that the prosecution’s reasons were not pretextual.

Statistical disparities may not be dispositive. The Supreme Court has indicated that the Equal Protection Clause only prohibits intentional discrimination, which cannot generally be proven with statistics alone. Nonetheless, a marked difference in the percentages of white and minority veniremembers challenged casts doubt on the prosecution’s intent. Whereas the *Jacobs* court dismissed the statistics at the end of its analysis, the Supreme Court in *Miller-El* framed its analysis around the statistics, asserting that they were unlikely to have occurred by “[h]appenstance.”

2. Inquire into Most Likely Explanation for Prosecutorial Action

In *Miller-El*, the Supreme Court carried its initial question, whether the statistics were more likely explained by discrimination or coincidence, throughout its analysis. When a prosecutor, while explaining the reasons for a challenge, mischaracterized a veniremember’s answer to a voir dire question, the Court inquired whether the prosecutor’s actions were more likely caused by misunderstanding or were evidence of discrimination. When the prosecution

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286 *Id.* at 240–41.

287 See *supra* notes 255–258 (discussing use of statistics in *Jacobs*).

288 *Supra* note 64.

289 See McClesky v. Kemp, 481 U.S. 279, 308–09 (1987) (holding that a statistical difference in the imposition of the death penalty between black and white defendants did not prove that the state had intentionally discriminated in a specific case); Washington v. Davis, 426 U.S. 229 (1976) (finding that a racially disproportionate impact of an employment test does not prove that the test was purposely discriminatory); Jefferson v. Hackney, 406 U.S. 535 (1972) (finding that a statistical difference in state funding of welfare programs used by minority and nonminority residents does not prove intentional discrimination). The Court has found that statistics may be dispositive when they reveal a near-complete exclusion of minorities. In *McCleskey*, 481 U.S. at 294 n.12, the Court distinguished the purported disparate impact of the death penalty from Gomillion v. Lightfoot, 364 U.S. 339 (1960), in which a state legislature redrew a city’s boundaries to exclude 395 of 400 black voters but not a single white voter, and Yick Wo v. Hopkins, 118 U.S. 356 (1886), in which a city denied laundry permits to all but one white applicant but no Chinese applicants.

290 See *supra* notes 257–258 and accompanying text.


292 *Id.* at 244.
chose to rearrange the venire when African Americans were at the front, thereby minimizing the probability of African Americans serving.\textsuperscript{293} the court theorized that while legitimate reasons could explain the shuffling, none had been offered, so discrimination seemed to be a likely explanation.\textsuperscript{294}

Language about which explanation was more likely—that tendered by the prosecution or discrimination—permeates the opinion. Looking at the prosecution’s disparate questioning, the Court found that discrimination provides “a much tighter fit of fact and explanation;” that “[a]ls between the State’s ambivalence explanation and Miller–El’s racial one, race is much the better;”\textsuperscript{295} and that the prosecution’s proffered explanations “fit the evidence less well than the racially discriminatory hypothesis.”\textsuperscript{296} Looking at the overall pattern of prosecutorial challenges, the Court found that “[t]he strikes correlate with no fact as well as they correlate with race.”\textsuperscript{297} This inquiry makes salient that to show the prosecution has acted discriminatorily, the defendant need only persuade the court by a preponderance of the evidence.

Accordingly in Jacobs, the Louisiana Supreme Court, rather than inquiring whether given nondiscriminatory reasons were “plausible”\textsuperscript{298} or “masked a racially discriminatory intent,”\textsuperscript{299} should have analyzed whether the reasons were the most likely explanations for the prosecutor’s challenges. Was veniremember Jordan more likely challenged because of his shorts or his race? Was it more likely that the prosecution engaged in disparate questioning because of expedience or because of race? While the defendant has the burden of proof in these questions, courts must keep in mind the overall statistics of the challenges, which may impugn any explanations proffered by the prosecution.

While a trial court can simply look at which explanation is more likely, the inquiry is more nuanced for appellate courts. The Supreme Court has held that trial court findings are

\textsuperscript{293}Texas Criminal law allows parties to shuffle the order of the venire. \textit{Id.} at 253 n.12 (citing TEX. CODE CRIM. PROC. ANN. art. 35.11(Vernon Supp. 2004–2005)). The Court noted that the prosecution requested shuffles on two occasions when African American veniremembers were in the front of the panel. \textit{Id.} at 253. In Texas, veniremembers are seated on the petit jury one-by-one, TEX. CODE CRIM. PROC. ANN. art. 35.20 (Vernon 2006), so if the prosecution (or defense) wants to avoid seating veniremembers at the front of the panel without having to use peremptory challenges, it can request a shuffle, thereby moving them to the back.

\textsuperscript{294}Miller–El, 545 U.S. at 254.

\textsuperscript{295} \textit{Id.} at 260.

\textsuperscript{296} \textit{Id.} at 266.

\textsuperscript{297} \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{298} 32 So. 3d 227, 230 (La. 2010).

\textsuperscript{299} \textit{Id.} at 235.
given “great deference.” While standards may differ by state, on direct review of Batson challenges, federal courts use the clearly erroneous standard. On habeas review, the standard is even higher: The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 requires the defendant to show the state conclusion to be “an unreasonable determination of the facts in light of the evidence presented at the state court proceeding.”

Even the demanding habeas standard, however, should not change the structure of courts’ analyses. Miller-El was a habeas case and the Supreme Court still structured its analysis around whether discrimination was a more convincing explanation than those offered by the prosecution. After asking this question repeatedly throughout its decision—and finding that discrimination was often the more persuasive answer—the Court found that the state court’s decision was “unreasonable as well as erroneous” and “shown up as wrong to a clear and convincing degree.”

3. Focus on Discrimination

The Supreme Court reached this conclusion in Miller-El because it did not focus on each challenge made by the prosecution in isolation, but on the accumulation of evidence of discrimination. The Court noted that while individual pieces of evidence are “open to judgment calls,” the evidence “viewed cumulatively . . . is too powerful to conclude anything but discrimination.” The Court found similarly in Snyder v. Louisiana, citing Miller-El for the proposition that “all of the circumstances that bear upon the issue of racial animosity must be consulted.”

In Miller-El, the Court engaged in the paradigmatic pretext analyses, examining whether the reasons were applicable to the challenged veniremembers, whether the reasons were plausible, and whether they could also be applied to unchallenged white veniremembers. But the Supreme Court did not rest its holding on a finding that the prosecution’s explanations for discrimination were unreasonable.

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300 See supra notes 275–278 and accompanying text (discussing deference given to trial court findings that prosecutors have not discriminated.).

301 Snyder v. Louisiana, 552 U.S. 472, 477 (2008); but see Bryan Adamson, Critical Errors: Courts’ Refusal to Recognize Intentional Race Discrimination Findings as Constitutional Facts, 28 YALE L. & POL’Y REV. 1 (2009) (arguing that, as constitutional facts, findings of intentional discrimination should be subjected to less-deferential review).


303 Id. at 266.

304 Miller-El, 545 U.S. at 265.


306 545 U.S. at 242–52.
any given juror were pretextual. Instead, it asserted that “[t]he whole of the voir dire testimony . . . casts the prosecutor’s reasons . . . in an implausible light.”

Similarly, in Snyder, the Court asserted that the prosecution’s discriminatory intent should not be analyzed separately for each juror, but that discrimination should be inferred from the prosecution’s cumulative use of challenges. The Court found that the prosecution’s nondiscriminatory reason for one veniremember was so unconvincing as to necessitate reversal, but emphasized that “if there were persisting doubts as to the outcome, a court would be required to consider the strike of [one veniremember] for the bearing it might have upon the strike of [another veniremember].”

The Court’s focus on the cumulative evidence of intentional discrimination is highlighted by Justice Thomas’s dissent. Arguing, “the majority finds that a succession of unpersuasive arguments amounts to a compelling case,” Justice Thomas discounted each piece of evidence relied on by the majority. Given the limited information available to the prosecution, it was reasonable to interpret a veniremember’s answer as favoring the defendant; the white veniremembers who may have similarly favored the defendant were questioned later in voir dire when the prosecution had fewer challenges remaining; the white veniremembers who were not challenged could be distinguished from the challenged black veniremembers; many reasons could explain the shuffling of the venire; the disparate questioning could be attributed to the differing answers given by veniremembers; and there was no evidence that any of the prosecutors who tried Miller-El had ever read the discriminatory jury-selection manual used in the district attorney’s office. Accordingly, Justice Thomas individually dismissed each piece of evidence as insufficient to prove pretext. But rather than ask whether each factor alone was sufficient, the majority focused on the broader question of whether, based on all of the available evidence, the prosecution had discriminated.

307 545 U.S. at 252.
308 552 U.S. at 478.
309 545 U.S. at 286 (Thomas, J., dissenting). Justice Thomas also argued that the majority improperly considered evidence that was not presented to the state courts. Id. at 279–85 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
310 Id. at 292 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
311 Id. at 290 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
312 Id. (Thomas, J., dissenting).
313 Id. at 304 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
314 Id. at 296–302 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
315 Id. at 305 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
In Jacobs, the Louisiana Supreme Court took an approach similar to that of Justice Thomas, addressing each nondiscriminatory reason individually, finding that the defendant had not proven them pretextual, and dismissing other factors as insufficient to prove pretext. The court should have followed the majority in Miller-El by evaluating the totality of the prosecution’s actions. Although, as demonstrated in Part II, many courts continue to focus on pretext, some courts have cited Miller-El for the proposition that the prosecution’s actions must be evaluated as a whole to see if discrimination in the most likely explanation.

The Louisiana Supreme Court should have followed such an approach in Jacobs. In addition to the statistical framing and the evidence that bore directly on pretext—explanations that seemed implausible, lacked connection to the facts of the case, were not developed during voir dire, and also applied to unchallenged white veniremembers—the prosecution also engaged in disparate questioning, and there was outside evidence of discrimination by the district attorney’s office. Upon reversing an initial trial of Jacobs for unrelated reasons, the Louisiana Supreme Court warned the trial court that the prosecution’s use of peremptory challenges raised questions of discrimination. Most shockingly, before the second trial, the prosecutors came to court dressed in ties decorated with nooses. These

316 See supra Part II.A.2 (discussing the court’s analysis of the prosecution’s nondiscriminatory reasons).
317 See supra Part II.C.4 (discussing the court’s analysis of statistics, disparate questioning and demeanor).
318 See, e.g., Flowers v. State, 947 So.2d 910, 937 (Miss. 2007) (“While each individual strike may have justifiably appeared to the trial court to be sufficiently race neutral, the trial court also has a duty to look at the State’s use of peremptory challenges in toto.”) (citing Miller-El, 545 U.S. at 252); Davis v. Fisk Elec. Co., 268 S.W.3d 508, 526 (Tex. 2008) (“After examining the totality of the circumstances, we conclude that race explains Fisk’s strikes of Daigle and Pickett better than any other reason . . . .”) (citing Miller-El, 545 U.S. at 266).
319 See supra notes 255–258 (discussing use of statistics in Jacobs).
320 See supra notes 200–202 and accompanying text. On remand, the appellate court analyzed two other jurors who were challenged for seemingly improbable reasons. See supra note 122 (discussing progression of Jacobs through the Louisiana courts). The prosecution struck one veniremember ostensibly because she wanted the defendant to testify and another veniremember because when asked during voir dire what she would worry about if her child ran away—the defendant had run away from home—the veniremember responded that she would worry about her child being hurt. The court upheld both challenges. State v. Jacobs, 2011 WL 2020747, No. 07-KA-887, at *12–13 (La Ct. App. May 24, 2011).
321 See supra notes 207–208 and accompanying text.
322 See supra notes 200–202 and accompanying text.
323 See supra note 246 and accompanying text.
324 See supra note 260–263 and accompanying text.
325 State v. Jacobs, 789 So.2d 1280, 1283 n.2 (La. 2001).
326 Brief for Defendant, supra note 182, at 4.
factors are not directly related to a prosecutor’s proffered explanations and, perhaps, individually, can be explained away. Consequently, a court focusing on pretext risks overlooking intentional discrimination.

CONCLUSION

This Article’s proposed shift in focus is not a cure-all. For those courts that continue to defer to prosecutors’ explanations despite evidence to the contrary, a mandate to use a different focus will not be effective. And for courts that thoroughly scrutinize prosecutors’ motives, the difficulty of determining whether a prosecutor has challenged a juror based on a good-faith guess or discrimination remains. Detecting discrimination will be especially difficult when its effects are more subtle, and, for example, the statistics are not overly skewed and the questioning does not appear disparate.

Nonetheless, this Article contends that a movement away from the current focus on pretext will improve courts’ identification of discrimination. Mathematically, pretext and discrimination may be equivalent: If a prosecutor discriminates, the proffered nondiscriminatory reason is pretextual, and if the prosecutor’s nondiscriminatory reason is pretextual, the prosecutor is discriminating. This equivalency does not, however, imply that courts are equally likely to find pretext as they are to find discrimination. This Article has argued that because prosecutors have so much flexibility in the nondiscriminatory reasons that they can proffer, it is extremely difficult for defendants to show any given reason is pretextual, even when courts employ factor tests to evaluate pretext.

The McDonnell Douglas framework is still helpful for its requirement that prosecutors provide nondiscriminatory reasons. But, as dictated by the Court in its post-McDonnell Douglas employment decisions, disproof of nondiscriminatory reasons is only one means of proving discrimination. Courts analyzing peremptory challenges are more likely to identify discrimination if, rather than focusing on pretext, they follow the Supreme Court in Miller-El and Snyder to ask whether, taking all of the prosecution’s actions into account, discrimination is the most likely explanation for the prosecution’s actions.

327 This leaves aside the question of unconscious discrimination, in which prosecutors offer reasons that they believe are legitimate, but are actually discriminatory. See supra note 63 (discussing unconscious discrimination). It also assumes that prosecutors do not proffer nondiscriminatory reasons to conceal other nondiscriminatory reasons. See supra Part III.A (discussing the distinction between pretext and discrimination).