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"Experimental Evidence on Negative Side Effects of Affirmative Action"

Abstract

We study the impact of affirmative action on peer-reviewing behavior. We conduct a real-effort tournament experiment in which prizes are awarded according to peer-reviews. Between treatments, we vary whether a quota is implemented or not and whether affirmed individuals face procedural disadvantages or not. We show that quotas lead to distorted peer-reviews, where affirmed individuals receive significantly less favorable reviews as compared to non-affirmed peers with similar performance. Distortions in peer-reviews are robust to changes in the justification of a quota through procedural disadvantages and seem to be driven by enhanced competition among affirmed individuals.