



Behavioral Decision Making Group Colloquium Series

is pleased to present



ALEX IMAS

Social and Decision Sciences
Carnegie Mellon University

Can Reputation Reverse Gender Bias?

A Field Experiment on the Dynamics of Discrimination

ABSTRACT

We study the dynamics of discrimination using a large-scale field experiment on an online mathematics forum. We post questions on accounts and exogenously vary the gender associated with the account and his or her reputation. Reputation is earned from votes for quality posts and is meant to provide a signal of ability that is endogenously generated by voters on the site. We document significant discrimination, measured in terms of votes per question, against female accounts with no reputation compared to male accounts with no reputation. In contrast, for high reputation accounts, the direction of discrimination reverses: questions posted to high reputation male accounts receive fewer votes than those posted to high reputation female accounts. These results are consistent with a dynamic model of statistical discrimination in which some voters initially believe females are of lower ability and use stricter standards to evaluate them, but conditional on building a reputation, females have a higher expected ability relative to males and they benefit from reversed discrimination. Our results have significant implications for both the psychology behind discrimination and the policies aimed at alleviating it.

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