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Gender differences in job applications and referrals (#62181)

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1) Have any data been collected for this study already?

It's complicated. We have already collected some data but explain in Question 8 why readers may consider this a valid pre-registration nevertheless.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?

We use a laboratory experiment to analyze gender differences in job applications and employment status. We ask:

- 1) Do men and women differ in their propensity to overstate their skills and the way they promote themselves in order to get a job?
- 2) Does the gender difference change over time conditional on past unemployment status?
- 3) How do male and female employers assess the self-reported skills of male versus female job applicants?
- 4) Do male and female employers assess male and female employees differently in the reference letters they write to other (future) potential employers?

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.

- a) Individuals' propensities to lie in reporting performance in a previous round of play, with the purpose of being hired by the employer
- b) Language used by individuals in free-form messages to promote themselves
- c) Employers' hiring decisions
- d) Employers' ex-post assessment of workers

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?

We will implement three treatment variations of a three-round hiring game, where two workers are matched with a potential employer, who decides which of the two workers to hire for a subsequent round of play.

T1: Workers self-report productivity in a previous real effort task to potential employer, and write a free-form self-promotion message;

T2: Same as T1, but at the beginning of round 2 and round 3, the employer sees the (un-)employment status of each worker in the previous round;

T3: Same as T2, but at the beginning of round 2 and round 3, the employer sees an assessment of each worker (if previously employed) written by the previous employer.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.

Regression analysis on the primary dependent variables, as a function of the worker's gender, including round fixed effects and treatment dummies. Important controls for the worker's decision to lie and for the self-promotion language will be the actual performance in the task, the gender of the competing worker, and the gender of the employer. The analysis of employer behavior will also include an indicator for (un-)employed status of each potential worker in the previous round, and indicators for the self-promotion messages sent by potential workers.

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.

We do not plan to exclude any observations, absent technical issues during the data collection.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.

We aim to have a minimum of 90 subjects per treatment, for a total of at least 270 participants.

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)

Secondary analysis: We will include additional questions and individual experimental tasks to be able to identify potential mechanisms behind any possible gender difference identified in the primary analysis. In particular, we will measure risk preferences, propensity to cheat in a die rolling game, survey questions aimed at capturing modesty, self-confidence and (incentivized) beliefs about others' performance in the task and others' tendency to lie when reporting past performance.

Existing data: We have conducted a few preliminary sessions to pilot the real effort task and calibrate its difficulty to have enough variation in both performance and propensity to lie about past performance.