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Conference on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Economics, Finance, and Central Banking

Discussion of "Gender and the time cost of peer review"

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Quick summary...

- Great paper that I definitely enjoy reading!
- The paper combines administrative data from *Energy Economics* (a top field journal in economics) with bibliometric data on articles and authors
- 2,359 articles with approximately 14% with a woman as the corresponding author (2005-2019)
- Key takeaways: The three “yes!”
 - Do reviewers spend more time reviewing female papers? **Yes!**
 - Do women spend more time reviewing their papers? **Yes!**
 - Does the referee’s experience matter? **Yes!**
- Accepted female-authored papers take **3-4 weeks longer** in review.
- The authors did a fantastic job by discussing some mechanisms
- Here, I will try to propose alternative stories that they could test to disentangle their suggested mechanisms

Suggestions...

- Empirical strategy
- Statistical discrimination?
- Some intriguing findings?
- Opening up the debate

Empirical strategy

- Measure of experience
 - Experience is measured as the number of **accepted** papers a referee previously reviewed for *Energy Economics*
 - How likely is this restriction to capture the *leniency* of the referee more than the experience?
 - I would suggest a broader measure using the total number of papers a referee previously reviewed for *Energy Economics*
- Control for the number of referees per papers
 - Is there a gender difference in the number of referees assigned?
 - A gender difference in the assignment in the number of referees could also be due to many discriminatory factors as well as non-discriminatory (complexity, novelty,...)
 - Gender diversity and complexity/novelty/performance: Hengel and Moon (2019), Díaz-García, González-Moreno, and Sáez-Martínez (2013); Hoogendoorn, Oosterbeek, and Van Praag (2013)...
 - Are papers allocated to experienced referees also allocated to fewer referees? Substitution between the number of referees and experience?

Statistical discrimination?

- Gender of the referee
 - Card et al. (2020) find that editors are 50% more likely to assign a female-authored paper to a female referee
 - Reasons that could make women delay the revisions (family commitment, services, lacking grant access,...) could make them delay referee report
 - Not in contradiction with the experienced referees updating (Kahn, Garcia-Manglano, and Bianchi, 2014: women penalty vanishes as age increases; suggestive catching up on the gap in Murray's papers in academia)

Some intriguing findings?

- Why does experience affect men and women differently?

Referee experience									0.216**
experience									(0.108)
experience×female									-0.107**
									(0.05)
No. obs.	7,035	7,035	7,035	7,035	7,035	7,035	7,035	7,035	7,035
R ²	0.083	0.070	0.069	0.087	0.089	0.093	0.114	0.313	0.315
Oster bounds (β_k)	[4.2, 4.4]	[4.8, 4.9]	[4.7, 4.8]	[3.5, 4.1]	-	-	-	-	-

Referee experience									-0.043
experience									(0.163)
experience×female									-0.402**
									(0.19)
No. obs.	3,814	3,814	3,809	3,809	3,814	3,814	3,814	6,440	6,440
R ²	0.112	0.133	0.105	0.151	0.114	0.153	0.394	0.443	0.444
Voice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

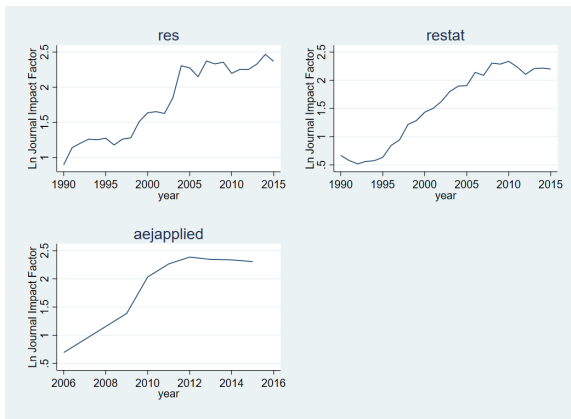
- Is it because of the “leniency” story? More lenient toward women?
- Are experienced referees penalizing low-quality men’s papers?
- Why is the gap increasing with the affiliation rank?
 - Is it an effect of visibility and networking?
 - Statistical discrimination: women quality is more doubted at the top (discussion surrounding affirmative actions, women quotas,...)
 - Then, what happens if you take the interaction with the author prominence?

Opening up the debate

- How can we reconcile the different results in the literature regarding delay in reviewing process by gender?
 - Hengel (2019) finds that women spent 3 to 6 months longer under review compared to men using data from *Econometrica* and *Review of Economic Studies*
 - Card et al. (202) finds no gendered delays with data from the *Journal of the European Economics Association*, the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, the *Review of Economics and Statistics*, and the *Review of Economic Studies*
 - Does this difference come from the allocation of papers to (experienced) referees? Is there something to learn from those journals where we do not observe any differences? Is the level set for those journals less ambiguous than in the others?...

Opening up the debate

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 - , However, this is a game where journals standards evolved over time
 - Top journals vs. Mid-tier journals: Mid-tier would eventually like to be a top. How to cop with the fear that setting a standard would preclude them from reaching this level?

Other suggestions

- Consider using the gender structure of the team instead of the gender of the corresponding authors only
 - Agree that the corresponding author may matter
 - But references looking at the corresponding author's importance focus on sciences broadly speaking (mostly medical) where the first and last author positions are important and signaling either of them as the corresponding author matters for “perceived credit allocation”
 - This could be different in economics

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- Clarify round vs. time to review: More experienced lesser time but more round?
- Back-of-the-envelope calculation on the publication loss?

Overall

- Great paper! Clearly explained! Easy to read and follow!
- However: you need 10 positive referee reports as an experience to reduce the gap by one day!
- Suggestive that we are not over yet understanding the gender gap in reviewing time...

Thank you!