

Is Good News Good for Everyone?

Testing the Gendered Effect of Relative Grades on Application Behaviors in Japanese College Admissions

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Abstract:

In many contexts, despite women's improved access to higher education, educational trajectories within higher education remain gender-segregated. This study draws on insights from a growing body of behavioral economics research that examines information updates as a potential source of gender disparities. Specifically, we test two hypotheses: (1) gender differences in conservatism, in which women update their beliefs more conservatively than men, and (2) gender asymmetry in information updating, in which women are more responsive to "bad" news while men respond more strongly to "good" news. We apply quasi-experimental methods—regression discontinuity and regression kink designs—to nationwide mock exam data to assess how letter-grade admission probabilities shape students' application behavior. The results show that students respond more strongly to positive than to negative information, and that men react to good news more than women.