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A Citation-Based Test for Discrimination at Economics and Finance Journals

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WORKING PAPER 5460

DOI 10.3386/w5460

ISSUE DATE February 1996

Discrimination is notoriously difficult to document. Convincing tests for discrimination require good measures of the legitimate determinants of the outcome of interest, for example wages and productivity. While few contexts provide data adequate to the task of measuring discrimination, copious bibliographic data on the impact of academic research make possible tests of discrimination in the editorial process. This study develops a test for possible bias with respect to author gender, prestige of author's institution, article content (theory vs. empiricism), and whether the author has ties to the editor by using a new approach based on an analysis of citations. We treat citations as a measure of article quality and ask whether papers by certain groups receive systematically different numbers of citations. The key to our approach is the observation that editors do not simply accept or reject papers. For accepted papers, editors determine articles' order within journal issue and length based on their quality assessments. We show that these 'editorial treatment' decisions are highly correlated with citations. Thus, we infer bias against a particular group of authors if their published articles have more citations, conditional editorial treatment, than other articles. Surprisingly, we document systematic

conditional editorial treatment, than other articles. Surprisingly, we document systematic editorial bias in favor of authors located outside of top institutions.

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N. Gregory Mankiw, Harvard University and NBER
July 10, 2025

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Raj Chetty, Harvard University and NBER
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July 24, 2025



2025, Methods Lecture, Raj Chetty and Kosuke Imai, "Uncovering Causal Mechanisms: Mediation Analysis and Surrogate Indices"

PRESENTERS: [RAJ CHETTY](#) & [KOSUKE IMAI](#)

SlidesBackground materials on mediationImai, Kosuke, Dustin Tingley, and Teppei Yamamoto. (2013). "Experimental Designs...

A blue banner for a panel discussion. On the left, there are three circular headshots of the panelists: Oleg Itskhoki, Paul Krugman, and Linda Tesar. To the right of the headshots, the text reads: "International Trade and Macroeconomics, Summer Institute 2025", "Panel on The Future of the Global Economy", "Oleg Itskhoki, Harvard University and NBER", "Paul Krugman, City University of New York and NBER", "Linda Tesar, University of Michigan and NBER", and "July 8, 2025".

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Panel on The Future of the Global Economy
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July 8, 2025

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Supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation grant #G-2023-19633, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation grant #20251294...

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