

Affirmative Action Outcomes



DISCUSSANT: BERK ÖZLER

Paper ready for submission...



- Really nice paper, well-written, thorough, and a joy to read...

1. The Boost Effect



- (AA admitted – non-AA not admitted)
 - These are different groups
 - Impossible to compare AA-admitted v. displaced...
- This is a strange estimand – would be much more natural as a DD:
 - Before/after policy change in 2002 X AA/non-AA
- But, the data does not allow for identification of people as “AA”

1. The Boost Effect



- Impacts are on the extensive margin, i.e. taking the bar exam...
- They are also on higher, lower the entrance exam score...
- Both eminently sensible findings...

2. Displaced vs. Displacer



- Most important to notice: a very small percentage of the non-AA students are getting displaced (really those scoring, say, 70-75).
 - Yes, they could get upset (they're getting replaced by students with much lower scores on average), but it's about 700 students out of more than 10,000...
- Actually, it seems to me that this is where more progress is needed, i.e. increasing the mass of incoming AA students...

2. Displaced vs. Displacer



- Unlike the “Boost Effect,” this is a very meaningful indicator.
 - Opponents of AA suggest that AA-admitted waste resources...
- Unconditionally, displacers underperform the displaced a little bit, but:
 - Conditionally they’re doing much better
 - Are private schools better, but just cost more?

3. The Diploma Effect



- Another question very pertinent for policy:
 - The “aggrieved” claim damages and cry “unfair” and even descriptive data that show the damage (or lack thereof) is very useful...
 - ✦ No change in (observed) outcomes for displaced
 - ✦ Large change for public school students.
 - ✦ Low power for black students...
- What would have happened if AA policy was more aggressive?

Conclusion



- Debunking myths:

1. Overestimating costs for non-AA?

- ❖ The costs are non-existent only in terms of becoming a lawyer. Might have been other costs... In the end, on average the policy put a poorer person than a richer one in a law school seat, and the latter was, again, on average, able to afford private.

2. AA helps beneficiaries?

- ❖ Yes, but with some efficiency costs

Conclusion



- Perhaps discuss the implications in terms of policy details a bit more?
 - Quotas
 - Mass of applicants earlier on
 - Other...