

**Authors**

Lori Beaman  
Northwestern University

Niall Keleher  
Director of Data Science and Engineering

Jeremy Magruder  
University of California, Berkeley

**Do Job Networks Disadvantage  
Women? Evidence from a  
Recruitment Experiment in Malawi**

Lori Beaman, *Northwestern University*

Niall Keleher, *University of California, Berkeley,  
and Innovations for Poverty Action*

Jeremy Magruder, *University of California, Berkeley*

We use a field experiment to show that referral-based hiring has the potential to disadvantage qualified women, highlighting another potential channel behind gender disparities in the labor market. Through a recruitment drive for a firm in Malawi, we look at men's and women's referral choices under different incentives and constraints. We find that men systematically refer few women, despite being able to refer qualified women when explicitly asked for female candidates. Performance pay also did not alter men's tendencies to refer men. In addition, women did not refer enough high-quality women to offset men's behavior.

**I. Introduction**

While the gender gap in labor force participation has declined sharply in the past 30 years, women continue to earn less than men in countries around

We thank IPA (Innovations for Poverty Action) Malawi field staff for dedicated and careful implementation and Sam Azenberg for research assistance. We also thank participants at numerous seminars and conference audiences for helpful comments. We are grateful to Pascaline Dupas, Matt Jackson, Suresh Jayachandran, Cynthia Kinnan, Ethan Ligon, Kaitan Mushi, Brian Raulo, Mark Rosenzweig, and Aley-

[Journal of Labor Economics, 2018, vol. 36, no. 1]  
© 2017 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved. 0734-4062/18/3601-0000\$05.00  
Submitted August 26, 2015; Accepted January 13, 2017; Electronically published November 9, 2017

000

This content downloaded from 108.111.115.227 on November 14, 2017 12:26:33 PM  
All use subject to University of Chicago Press Terms and Conditions (<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/uhp>).

# Do Job Networks Disadvantage Women? Evidence from a Recruitment Experiment in Malawi

We use a field experiment to show referral-based hiring has the potential to disadvantage qualified women, highlighting another potential channel behind gender disparities in the labor market. Through a recruitment drive for a firm in Malawi, we look at men's and women's referral choices under different incentives and constraints. We find that men systematically refer few women, despite being able to refer qualified women when explicitly

asked for female candidates. Performance pay also did not alter men's tendencies to refer men. Additionally, women did not refer enough high quality women to offset men's behavior.

November 07, 2017