

INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES SEQUENTIALLY

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Abstract

This paper studies how an interviewer’s assessment of a candidate is influenced by her sequential perception of other candidates. We leverage a unique dataset including over 9000 independent interviewer assessments from the admission workshops of a large study grant program. Our results show that the same candidate receives a worse rating when randomly assigned to a higher quality sequence. Moreover, the quality of the previous –but not the next– candidate has an additional negative influence. This influence is about as large as the joint influence of the other observed candidates. It results in a strong negative auto-correlation in ratings: if the previous candidate received a positive assessment, the probability of a positive assessment decreases by about 20%, and the probability of a final acceptance into the scholarship program decreases by about 12%. The results imply that minor changes in candidate ordering can have major consequences on labor market careers.

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