(Under Review)

Affirmative Action and other Group Tradeoff Policies: Identifiability of those adversely affected

Ilana Ritov  Eyal Zamir
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Contact Information

Ilana Ritov
School of Education and Center for Rationality
Hebrew University
Jerusalem 91905
Israel
ilana.ritov@huji.ac.il

Eyal Zamir
Faculty of Law
Hebrew University
Jerusalem 91905
Israel
eyal.zamir@huji.ac.il
Affirmative Action and other Group Tradeoff Policies: Identifiability of those adversely affected

Abstract

When social resources are limited, improving the lot of the underprivileged comes at the expense of others. Thus, policies such as Affirmative Action (AA) – designed to increase the representation of minority people in higher education or employment – implicitly entail tradeoffs between groups. We propose that, while aversion to person- or group-tradeoffs of this sort is widespread, the identifiability of those who stand to lose is a moderating factor. In five experiments, we compared support for several hypothetical AA procedures that are equivalent in terms of the overall harm and benefit, but differ with respect to the identifiability of those who stand to lose from its implementation. Results support the claim that the identifiability of those adversely affected reduces support for AA policies and for similar procedures that are unrelated to civil rights issues. Possible determinants of this effect are discussed.