Increasing Workplace Diversity: Evidence from a Recruiting Experiment at a Fortune 500 Company

Abstract

The persistent lack of workplace diversity in management and leadership may lead to organizational vulnerabilities. White males occupy most high-profile positions in the largest U.S. corporations whereas African Americans, Hispanics, and women are clearly underrepresented in leadership roles. We use a natural field experiment to test means to attract minority candidates for top professional careers. We randomly vary the content in recruiting materials of a major financial services corporation to signal the extent to which the employer values diversity among its workers. We find that signaling explicit interest in employee diversity has a strong positive effect on raising interest among racial minority candidates, and increasing the likelihood that they apply and the probability that they are selected. These results uncover an effective method for disrupting monocultures in management through a minor intervention that influences sorting among job-seekers into high-profile careers.