

Intergroup Bias in Parliamentary Rule Enforcement

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Abstract

Political actors are often required to enforce rules without giving in-groups special treatment. But are such institutional roles likely to be successful? Here, we exploit a special case of exogenously assigned intergroup relations: debates in the Danish parliament, in which parliament chairmen drawn from parliamentary parties enforce speaking time. Analyzing 5,338 speeches scraped from online transcripts, we provide evidence that speech lengths are biased in favor of the presiding chairman's party. On average, speakers of the same party as the presiding chairman give 5 percent longer speeches and are 5 percent more likely to exceed the speaking time limit. The paper contributes to the extant literature by demonstrating political intergroup bias in a natural setting, suggesting that group loyalties can supersede institutional obligations even in a 'least likely' context of clear rules, complete observability, and a tradition of parliamentary cooperation.

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