

Social transformations and labour market entry

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Summary

A demographic balance in desirable occupations is socially important. Compared to white males, women and people of colour tend to have lower labour market outcomes and to be under-represented in top job positions. Despite the increasing participation of people of colour and females in higher education, few become faculty members in universities. The inclusion of previously excluded groups in academia is particularly important for developing countries that experienced large social transformations and have less mature knowledge systems. Even if gender and racial unbalances have been extensively investigated, many studies overlook the fundamental characteristics of the process of entry into academia. In particular, this dissertation examines how individual and systemic mechanisms relate with supervision, collaboration, and mutual evaluation when they first manifest in an academic career.

Mentorships and supervision are known to affect the students' future careers development and involve one of the first academic tie for a student. Therefore, the second chapter examines the formation of student-advisor relationship and whether race and gender homophily plays a role in the tertiary education. The chapter uses student enrolment data of bachelor, master, and Ph.D. students and their advisors and measures the relative magnitudes of induced and choice homophily race- (gender-) based homophily. Further, the chapter examines where choice homophily originates, estimating homophilous preferences in the interacting populations of black and white (male and female) students and advisors.

The results of chapter 2 highlight that the process of racial and gender inclusion is still in a transition phase. Indeed, both race-based and gender-based homophily play a crucial role in tie formation. In particular, the university system itself induces half of the observed homophily levels while half arises from individual choices. The latter mostly originates in the population of white/male students and black/female advisors. Further, the chapter highlights the potential tension between social transformation and effective inclusion. Even where homophilous preferences are unchanged

at the individual level, a demographic change in the composition of the population can mechanically increase the aggregate homophily in the system and, in turn, slow down the inclusion.

The third chapter looks at the training phase, analysing the first co-authorship link of students — the one with their doctoral advisors. Doctoral training is critical today because job market committees often use candidate publications during the Ph.D. as a screening criterion. Starting from these premises, chapter three studies whether homophily and advisor characteristics influence students' productivity during their doctorates. In particular, the chapter asks whether the (racial and/or gender) composition of student-advisor matter for publication productivity of Ph.D. students and whether the relationship varies for different student productivity-profiles.

The chapter finds that females working with a female advisor are as productive as male students working with a male advisor. While in contrast, when female students work with a male, they are less productive compared to male-male student-advisor couples. Interestingly, the gender difference is u-shaped over student productivity and cross-racial ties display almost no gender difference in productivity. Indeed, looking the sub-samples of white-white and black-black, couples gender differences in average productivity across the groups (and pairs) are driven by differences in the upper tail of the productivity distribution.

Chapters four and five go further to investigate the transition from the Ph.D. to the first academic job using data from South Africa and Mexico. In particular, the chapters study the link between university prestige stratification and research performance in the short, medium, and long-run. The chapters highlight predictable hiring patterns from one university to another that follow an underlying prestige hierarchy. Moreover, in both systems, internal hiring of Ph.D. graduates is positively related to academic performance. This underlines a positive role of inertia that might prevent talents and knowledge exchanges among universities.

This dissertation examines process of entry into the workplace looking at individual and systemic mechanisms. Globally, this work underlines how homophily, Matthew effects, and prestige stratification are strong mechanisms in the workplace. These mechanisms can inhibit social transformations at the aggregate level and at the same time be beneficial for individual performance. This ambiguity might explain why transformations are often unevenly distributed in the job hierarchy, fields, and universities. This book highlights the need for continuous policy intervention and multiple targets to achieve sustainable social transformations in the workplace.