NBER Digitization Tutorial Application

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Education:

I began my graduate course of study in the economics PhD program at the University of California, Berkeley. I have advanced to candidacy and I am currently a fourth-year student. The fields for which I took field exams are labor economics and public finance.

Research:

My general research interests span several topics within the economics of education and labor economics. These include school choice, gender and racial discrimination in the labor market, and online labor market platforms. It is because of this interest in online labor markets that participating in the Digitization Tutorial is of particular interest to me. I am glad to see that for this year's tutorial there will be an emphasis on the labor consequences of digitization and AI. I also look forward to the opportunity to be introduced to other topics in the economics of digitization.

Currently I study online labor marketplaces that connect freelancers to prospective clients. On these platforms freelancers can freely set their own rates and availability and the rates of other freelancers are clearly visible. Objective statistics on freelancer performance are also easily observed by all marketplace participants. Thus, the upshot of the online platform setting is that several oft-cited mechanisms for gender pay gaps; bargaining over pay, lack of pay transparency, wage penalties for job flexibility, and statistical discrimination, are greatly weakened.

I have scraped publicly available information from over 20,000 freelance tutor profiles from the online tutor platforms Italki and Wyzant. This allows me to control for almost all variables students consider when choosing a tutor. Regression estimates find that women earn up to 5 percent higher hourly rates than men when teaching humanities subjects while men earn 10 percent higher rates for STEM subjects. The gender wage gap also varies widely by tutor country of origin. The next steps for this research will be to investigate the extent to which consumer bias can explain why gender wage gaps persist in the transparent environment of online marketplaces. A large part of this agenda will rely on natural language processing (NLP) techniques applied to client reviews to see if male and female freelancers are systematically perceived as having different qualities by clients.

Dissertation committee members: Sydnee Caldwell, Enrico Moretti, Chris Walters (Chair)