

Can mentoring help
female assistant professors?
An evaluation by randomized trial

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Glass ceiling in US academia (Economics)

- ▶ Economics is one of most salient cases of “leaky pipe”
- ▶ 1/3 women in PhD;
29% assistant professors;
23% associate professors;
14% full professors.
- ▶ Bottom-up intervention on assistant professors with senior mentoring and specific advice

Why is (economics) academia interesting?

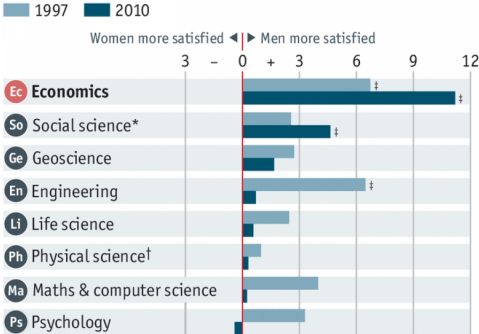
- ▶ Extreme example of glass ceiling
- ▶ Features (“up-or-out” tenure clause) that are common to some professions in private sector (e.g. law firms, promotion to partner).
- ▶ Very good measure of productivity and career outcomes
- ▶ Economics: biggest (and mounting) job satisfaction gap, even compared to fields with similar gender gaps

Job satisfaction gaps

Unhappy lot

United States

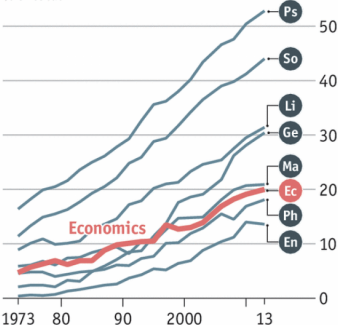
Job satisfaction, difference between men and women responding "very" or "somewhat satisfied", % points



Source: National Science Foundation, Survey of Doctorate Recipients

Economist.com

Share of female academics with tenure or in tenure-track positions
% of total



Excluding: *Economics †Geoscience
†Statistically significant at 5% level

Perspectives on glass ceiling

- ▶ Gender differences in psychological attributes
- ▶ Work-life balance considerations
- ▶ Gender identity norms
- ▶ Pre-existing conditions
 - ▶ by definition, glass ceiling in a profession implies that women in entry-level positions may lack role models, female mentors, networks etc.
- ▶ Possible intervention
 - ▶ top-down (quotas)
 - ▶ bottom-up (intervene at the source)

Intervention

Two components

- ▶ General advice on research, publications, grants and networking
- ▶ Specific and intensive advice on one piece of research

Results

- ▶ 11pp increase in prob of having tenure at (from?) top 40 schools. (control baseline?)
- ▶ symmetric decrease at 41+ rank schools
- ▶ no impact on staying in academia
- ▶ 10pp increase in any top publications throughout

By boosting publication records, intervention has altered the “quality” composition of tenure jobs among treated researchers

Channels?

- ▶ General advice (low cost)
- ▶ Specific advice (expensive)
- ▶ Network formation (low cost)
- ▶ Role models? (female vs male mentor)
 - ▶ unclear from existing work whether female leaders have positive impact on the careers of junior women

It would be very interesting to unbundle these components in future experiments.

Further channels and outcomes

- ▶ Impact on specific paper being discussed in CEMENT versus generic advice
- ▶ Impact on other publications
- ▶ Heterogeneous effects
 - ▶ where does treatment bite?
- ▶ Within-department spillovers on nontreated
 - ▶ who generates spillovers?