

# Simcoe and Waguespack: “What’s in a (missing) name?”

Discussion by

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# The academic Matthew effect

Morris Zapp contemplates his impending visit to the Villa Serbelloni in Bellagio and muses on the rewards of academic success:

That was the beauty of academic life, as Morris saw it. To them that had had, more would be given. All you needed to do to get started was to write one really damned good book - which admittedly wasn't easy when you were a young college teacher just beginning your career ..... But on the strength of that one damned good book you could get a grant to write a second book in more favourable circumstances; with two books you got promotion, a lighter teaching load, and courses of your own devising; you could then use your teaching as a way of doing research for your next book, which you were thus able to produce all the more quickly. This productivity made you eligible for tenure, further promotion, more generous and prestigious research grants, more relief from routine teaching and administration. In theory, it was possible to wind up being full professor while doing nothing except to be permanently absent on some kind of sabbatical grant or fellow-ship.

David Lodge: *Small World* ( Penguin Edition, page 151).

# Ingenuous idea, well executed

- Does a name contain information about quality? Or only about status in the profession?
- That is, what lies behind the Matthew effect?
- Two parts to test:
  - **Status** - Compare publication results for “high status” authors whose names are on abstract with those whose names are concealed.
  - **Quality** - Given higher probability of publication for “high status” authors, are they more likely to be cited later?
  - Additional result – greater attention paid to “high status” authors
- Results pass the smell test, by and large.

# Some questions

- Status and attention results pretty solid; less confident about quality
- Could we run such an experiment with SSRN, NEP, NBER, CEPR mailings?
  - What do we think would happen?
- Field, area controls in citations?
  - Are we sure that patent and article citations are unbiased?
- Why no WG effects? – seems plausible

## Table 3: Identity as a signal

- Why linear probability?
- Research question: is an internet draft published (as a request for comments)?
  - All authors listed, no high status authors - 7% average pub rate
  - High status author (known) – 10% higher
  - High status author (not known) – 3% higher
  - Other authors (not known) – 5% lower

# Ai and Norton (2003)

Definition of the interaction term: How does the marginal effect of one variable (z) covary with changes in the other (x)?

$$E[y | x, z] = F(\alpha x + \beta z + \gamma xz) = F(w)$$

$$\frac{\partial E[y | x, z]}{\partial x} = f(w)(\alpha + \gamma z)$$

$$\frac{\partial^2 E[y | x, z]}{\partial x \partial z} = f(w)\gamma + f'(w)(\alpha + \gamma z)(\beta + \gamma x)$$

The answer can be complex and of opposite sign from the interaction coefficient.

But.....this can be estimated (easy in TSP ☺)

# Table 4: Identity & attention

- What are the dependent variables exactly (not on table)?
- Why OLS? Not counts?
- Results for email lists, replies, revisions:
  - Left-out category – all authors listed, no high status authors: 1.41, 4.72, 1.88
  - High status author (known): 0.67, 2.29, 0.67
  - High status author (not known): 0.20, 1.17, 0.07
  - Other authors (not known): 0.11, -0.32, -0.21
- When adjusted for days-to-meeting, experience, size, et al. is negative – that is, not knowing who the author is reduces activity – why?

# Table 5: Status and citations

- Results for RFC cites, patent cites, article cites:
  - Left-out category – all authors listed, no high status authors: 10.89, 1.34, 0.84 in sample
  - High status author mostly higher except for article cites; correlated with being published.
  - Why are article cites different?



# Implications

- The interesting related question:
  - What does this tell us about how to allocate research funds?
  - Does it justify repeated competitive peer review as the best method?
  - Role of star scientists?