Seminario de Microeconomía Aplicada - Automation and Gender: Implications for Occupational Segregation and the Gender Skill Gap

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Abstract: We examine the differential effects of automation on the labor market and educational outcomes of women relative to men over the past four decades. Although women were disproportionately employed in occupations with a high risk of automation in 1980, they were more likely to shift to high-skill, high-wage occupations than men over time. We provide a causal link by exploiting variation in local labor market exposure to automation attributable to historical differences in local industry structure. For a given change in the exposure to automation across commuting zones, women were more likely than men to shift out of routine task-intensive occupations to high-skill, high wage occupations over the subsequent decade. The net effect is that initially routine-intensive local labor markets experienced greater occupational gender integration. College attainment among younger workers, particularly women, also rose significantly more in areas more exposed to automation. We propose a model of occupational choice with endogenous skill investments, where social skills and routine tasks are q-complements, and women have a comparative advantage in social skills, to explain the observed patterns. Supporting the model mechanisms, areas with greater exposure to automation experienced a greater movement of women into occupations with high social skill (and high cognitive) requirements than men.

Acerca de la expositora: Patricia Cortes is an Associate Professor of Markets, Public Policy, and Law at the Questrom School of Business of Boston University. She is an empirical labor economist working on international migration and gender. Her current research focuses on understanding the sources of the gender pay gap, particularly for the highly educated. Her work has been published in leading economic journals, including the *Journal of Political Economy*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and *Review of Economic Studies*. Her research has informed Congressional testimony and has been featured by major media outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Prior to joining BU, Cortes was an Assistant Professor at University of Chicago, Booth School of Business. Cortes obtained her PhD in Economics from MIT and a Master’s and Bachelor’s degree in Economics from La Universidad de los Andes in Bogota, Colombia.

Tiempo de exposición: 1 hora

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