

# Wages, Unemployment and Inequality with Heterogeneous Firms and Workers

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# Introduction

- Three prominent features of product and labor markets are:
  - ① substantial differences in size, performance and workforce composition across firms;
  - ② variation in wages and other labor market outcomes for workers with the same observed characteristics;
  - ③ positive unemployment

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- We develop a general equilibrium model that captures these features
- We then use the model to study:
  - allocation of workers across firms
  - size and productivity distribution across firms
  - distribution of wages and income within and between sectors
  - sectoral and economy-wide unemployment rates
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- A few facts about income inequality:
  - residual inequality
  - within-sector and between firms

# Ingredients of the model

- 1 Firm productivity heterogeneity
- 2 Unobserved worker ability heterogeneity
  - general worker ability
  - match-specific productivity
- 3 Random search and matching
- 4 Costly screening
- 5 Production technology with complementarities
  - Rosen (1982), Kremer (1993), Garicano (2000)

# Main Findings

- Labor market frictions:
  - Search friction increases sectoral unemployment, while screening friction reduces it
  - Labor market frictions have no effect on sectoral wage inequality, but they do affect economy-wide inequality
  - Both labor market frictions reduce welfare
- Interdependence between product and labor market:
  - Size distribution of firms is more dispersed in sectors with more productivity and ability dispersion
  - Wage inequality increases in the dispersion of firm productivity, but may increase or decrease in the dispersion of worker ability
- Labor market outcomes for workers with similar ability:
  - Workers with higher ability are less likely to end up unemployed
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- Trade increases unemployment and wage inequality within sectors

## Preferences and Demand

- Utility function:

$$\mathbb{U} = q_0 + \sum_{i=1}^I \frac{1}{\zeta_i} Q_i^{\zeta_i}, \quad \zeta_i > 0$$

- Preferences for differentiated products in sector  $i$ :

$$Q_i = \left[ \int_{\omega \in \Omega_i} q_i(\omega)^{\beta_i} d\omega \right]^{\frac{1}{\beta_i}}, \quad \zeta_i < \beta_i < 1$$

- Demand functions:

$$q_i(\omega) = Q_i^{-\frac{\beta_i - \zeta_i}{1 - \beta_i}} p_i(\omega)^{-\frac{1}{1 - \beta_i}}$$

- Indirect utility function:

$$\mathbb{V} = E + \sum_{i=1}^I \frac{1 - \zeta_i}{\zeta_i} Q_i^{\zeta_i},$$

where  $Q_i^{-(1-\zeta_i)} = P_i$

# Market Structure

- All goods are produced with labor
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- The market for brands of the differentiated product is monopolistically competitive:
  - Fixed entry cost  $f_e$  in terms of the homogenous good
  - The firm then learns its productivity  $\theta$ , drawn from a Pareto distribution:  $G_\theta(\theta) = 1 - (\theta_{\min}/\theta)^z$ ,  $z > 2$
  - Fixed production cost  $f_d$  in terms of the homogeneous good
  - Revenue of the firm with output  $y$

$$r = Q^{-(\beta-\zeta)} y^\beta$$

- If revenue is insufficient to cover all costs, the firm exits

## Production Technology

- Output of a firm with productivity  $\theta$  and  $h$  employees with average ability  $\bar{a}$ :

$$y = \theta h^\gamma \bar{a} = \theta \left(\frac{1}{h}\right)^{1-\gamma} \int_0^h a_i di, \quad 0 < \gamma < 1$$

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- Ability of workers  $a$  is unobservable and distributed Pareto:  
 $G_a(a) = 1 - (a_{\min}/a)^k, k > 2$
- By paying  $bn$  a firm can match randomly with  $n$  workers
- By paying  $ca_c^\delta/\delta$  a firm can screen workers with ability below  $a_c$

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$$\bar{a} = \frac{k}{k-1} a_c \quad \text{and} \quad h = n \cdot (a_{\min}/a_c)^k$$

$$y = \frac{ka_{\min}^{\gamma k}}{k-1} \theta n^\gamma a_c^{1-\gamma k}, \quad \gamma k < 1$$

## Firm's Problem

- Wage bargaining as in Stole and Zwiebel (1996):  $1/(1 + \beta\gamma)$  is the firm's share of revenues
- Firm's problem:

$$\pi(\theta) \equiv \max_{\substack{n \geq 0, \\ a_c \geq a_{\min}}} \left\{ \frac{1}{1 + \beta\gamma} Q^{-(\beta-\zeta)} \left[ \left( \frac{ka_{\min}^{\gamma k}}{k-1} \right) \theta n^{\gamma} a_c^{1-\gamma k} \right]^{\beta} - bn - \frac{c}{\delta} a_c^{\delta} - f_d \right\}$$

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- Firms that sample more workers are also more selective:

$$(1 - \gamma k)bn(\theta) = \gamma ca_c(\theta)^{\delta}$$

- Assuming  $\delta > k$ , these firms also hire more workers:

$$(1 - \gamma k)bh(\theta) = \gamma ca_{\min}^k a_c(\theta)^{\delta-k}$$

## Wages, Productivity and Profits

- As a result of bargaining, the wage rate is:

$$w(\theta) = \frac{\beta\gamma}{1 + \beta\gamma} \frac{r(\theta)}{h(\theta)} = b \left[ \frac{a_c(\theta)}{a_{\min}} \right]^k$$

- *Size-wage premium* in the model:

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- The profit of the firm is

$$\pi(\theta) = \frac{\Gamma}{1 + \beta\gamma} r(\theta) - f_d, \quad \Gamma \equiv 1 - \beta\gamma - \frac{\beta}{\delta}(1 - \gamma k)$$

and revenue is  $r(\theta) = \kappa_r b^{-\frac{\beta\gamma}{\Gamma}} c^{-\frac{\beta(1-\gamma k)}{\delta\Gamma}} Q^{-\frac{\beta-\zeta}{\Gamma}} \theta^{\frac{\beta}{\Gamma}}$

## Free Entry and Zero Profit

- Zero-profit productivity cutoff:

$$\pi(\theta_d) = \kappa_\pi \left[ b^{-\beta\gamma} c^{-\beta(1-\gamma k)/\delta} Q^{-(\beta-\zeta)} \theta_d^\beta \right]^{1/\Gamma} - f_d = 0,$$

so that

$$\pi(\theta) = f_d \left[ (\theta/\theta_d)^{\beta/\Gamma} - 1 \right]$$

- Free entry condition:

$$f_e = \int_{\theta_d}^{\infty} \pi(\theta) dG_\theta(\theta) = f_d \int_{\theta_d}^{\infty} \left[ (\theta/\theta_d)^{\beta/\Gamma} - 1 \right] dG_\theta(\theta)$$

## Labor Market

- Tightness of the labor market:  $x = N/L$
- Hiring cost is increasing in the tightness of the labor market:

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- The indifference condition for workers is therefore  $bx = 1$  so that

$$b = \alpha_0^{1/(1+\alpha_1)} > 1 \quad \text{and} \quad x = b^{-1} = \alpha_0^{-1/(1+\alpha_1)} < 1.$$

## Sectoral Equilibrium

- Productivity cutoff:

$$\theta_d = \left[ \left( \frac{\beta}{z\Gamma - \beta} \right) \frac{f_d}{f_e} \right]^{1/z} \theta_{\min}$$

- Sectoral Output:

$$Q^{\beta-\zeta} = \kappa_Q b^{-\beta\gamma} c^{-\beta(1-\gamma k)/\delta}$$

- Number of workers searching for job and number of firms:

$$L = \frac{\beta\gamma}{1 + \beta\gamma} Q^\zeta \quad \text{and} \quad M = \frac{1}{\gamma z f_e} L$$

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### Proposition

*Welfare is decreasing in search cost (b) and screening cost (c).*

## Variation Across Firms

- Revenue:

$$r(\theta) = \frac{1+\beta\gamma}{\Gamma} f_d \left( \frac{\theta}{\theta_d} \right)^{\beta/\Gamma}$$

- Employment:

$$h(\theta) = \frac{\beta\gamma}{\Gamma} \frac{f_d}{b} \left[ \frac{\beta(1-\gamma k)}{\Gamma} \frac{f_d}{ca_{\min}^\delta} \right]^{-k/\delta} \left( \frac{\theta}{\theta_d} \right)^{\beta(1-k/\delta)/\Gamma}$$

- Screening cutoff:

$$a_c(\theta) = \left[ \frac{\beta(1-\gamma k)}{\Gamma} \frac{f_d}{c} \right]^{1/\delta} \left( \frac{\theta}{\theta_d} \right)^{\beta/\delta\Gamma}$$

- Wage rate:

$$w(\theta) = b \left[ \frac{\beta(1-\gamma k)}{\Gamma} \frac{f_d}{ca_{\min}^\delta} \right]^{k/\delta} \left( \frac{\theta}{\theta_d} \right)^{\beta k/\delta\Gamma}$$

## Distribution of Firm Size and Productivity

- Firm size (in terms of employment and revenue) and measured productivity are distributed Pareto:

$$F_h(h) = 1 - \left(h_d/h\right)^{\frac{z\Gamma}{\beta(1-k/\delta)}} \quad \text{for} \quad h \geq h_d \equiv \frac{\beta\gamma}{\Gamma} \frac{f_d}{b} \left[ \frac{\beta(1-\gamma k)}{\Gamma} \frac{f_d}{ca_{\min}^\delta} \right]^{-k/\delta},$$

$$F_r(r) = 1 - \left(r_d/r\right)^{z\Gamma/\beta} \quad \text{for} \quad r \geq r_d \equiv \frac{1+\beta\gamma}{\Gamma} f_d,$$

$$F_t(t) = 1 - \left(t_d/t\right)^{z\delta\Gamma/(\beta k)} \quad \text{for} \quad t \geq t_d \equiv b \frac{1+\beta\gamma}{\beta\gamma} \left[ \frac{\beta(1-\gamma k)}{\Gamma} \frac{f_d}{ca_{\min}^\delta} \right]^{k/\delta}.$$

- Recall that  $\Gamma = 1 - \beta\gamma - \beta(1 - \gamma k)/\delta$  is increasing in  $k$  and  $\Gamma/k$  is decreasing in  $k$

### Proposition

*Dispersion of firm size increases in dispersion of productivity ( $z \downarrow$ ) and dispersion of ability ( $k \downarrow$ ). Dispersion of measured productivity decreases in  $z$ , but increases in  $k$ .*

## Sectoral Unemployment

- Sectoral unemployment rate:

$$u = \frac{L - H}{L} = 1 - \frac{H N}{N L} = 1 - \sigma x, \quad x = 1/b$$

- Sectoral hiring rate:

$$\sigma \equiv \frac{H}{N} = \left[ \frac{a_{\min}}{a_c(\theta_d)} \right]^k \frac{1}{1 + \mu} = \left[ \frac{\Gamma}{\beta(1 - \gamma k)} \frac{ca_{\min}^\delta}{f_d} \right]^{k/\delta} \frac{1}{1 + \mu},$$

where

$$\mu \equiv \frac{\beta k / \delta}{z\Gamma - \beta} \in (0, 1)$$

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### Proposition

*Unemployment is higher in sectors with higher search cost ( $b$ ) and lower screening cost ( $c$ ); unemployment is higher in sectors with more productivity dispersion ( $z \downarrow$ ), but may be higher or lower in sectors with more ability dispersion ( $k \downarrow$ ).*

## Sectoral Wage Inequality

- Wage distribution:

$$F_w(w) = 1 - \left(\frac{w_d}{w}\right)^{1+\mu^{-1}} \quad \text{for } w \geq w_d \equiv b \left[ \frac{\beta(1-\gamma k)}{\Gamma} \frac{f_d}{ca_{\min}^\delta} \right]^{k/\delta} > 1$$

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- Lorenz curve and Gini coefficient:

$$s_w = \mathcal{L}_w(s_h) \equiv 1 - (1 - s_h)^{1/(1+\mu)},$$

$$\mathcal{G}_w = 1 - 2 \int_0^1 \mathcal{L}_w(s) ds = \frac{\mu}{2 + \mu}$$

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- Theil index:

$$\begin{aligned} T_w &= \int_{w_d}^{\infty} \frac{w}{\bar{w}} \ln\left(\frac{w}{\bar{w}}\right) dF_w(w) \\ &= \mu - \ln(1 + \mu) \end{aligned}$$

## Sectoral Wage Inequality

- A sufficient statistic for wage inequality:

$$\mu = \frac{\beta k / \delta}{z\Gamma - \beta}$$

### Proposition

*The sectoral distribution of wages is more equal in sectors with less productivity dispersion ( $z \uparrow$ ), but it can be more or less equal in sectors with less ability dispersion ( $k \uparrow$ ).*

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- Sectoral income inequality:

$$T_l = T_w - \ln(1 - u) = \mu - \ln(1 + \mu) - \ln(1 - u)$$

## Aggregate Rate of Unemployment

$$\mathbf{u} = \sum_{i=1}^I \frac{L_i}{\bar{L}} u_i = \sum_{i=1}^I \frac{L_i}{\bar{L}} (1 - \sigma_i x_i).$$

- Search and screening costs ( $b$  and  $c$ ) reduce the size of the sector,  $L_i$
- They have opposite effects on the sectoral unemployment rate,  $u_i$

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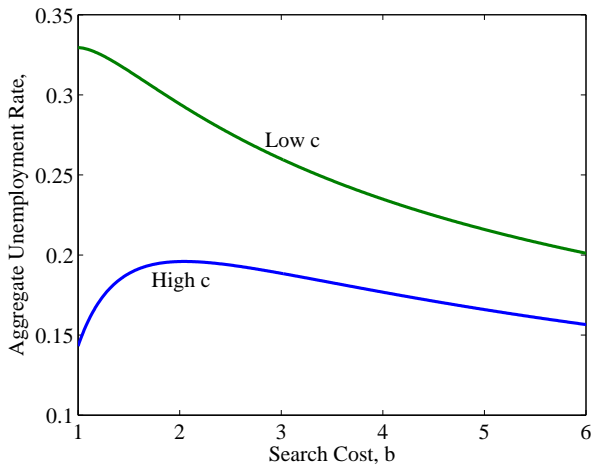
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### Proposition

*An increase in a sector's screening cost ( $c$ ) reduces aggregate unemployment while an increase in a sector's search cost ( $b$ ) reduces aggregate unemployment if and only if*

$$\frac{u_i}{1 - u_i} > \frac{\beta - \zeta}{\gamma \beta \zeta}.$$

## Aggregate Rate of Unemployment



## Aggregate Wage and Income Inequality

- Theil index of aggregate income inequality:

$$\mathbf{T}_i = \sum_{i=1}^I \frac{L_i}{L} T_{ii} = \sum_{i=1}^I \frac{L_i}{L} [\mu_i - \ln(1 + \mu_i) - \ln(1 - u_i)]$$

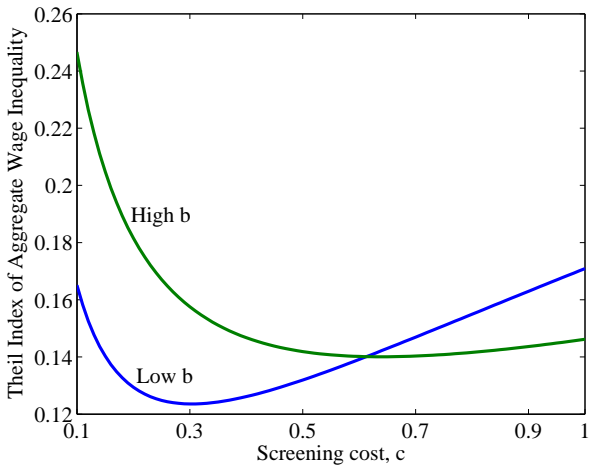
### Proposition

*An increase in screening cost ( $c_i$ ) reduces aggregate income inequality, while an increase in search cost ( $b_i$ ) reduces it if and only if*

$$T_{ii} > \frac{\beta - \zeta}{\gamma\beta\zeta}.$$

- Contrast this result with the previous result for aggregate unemployment rate
- Additionally, we show that both  $c$  and  $b$  can increase or decrease aggregate wage inequality

## Aggregate Wage Inequality



# Unemployment and Wages Distribution by Ability

- Unemployment rate by ability:

$$u(a) = 1 - x \cdot \sigma(a) = 1 - \frac{1}{b} \left[ 1 - \left( \frac{a_d}{a} \right)^{k/\mu} \right] \quad \text{for } a \geq a_d$$

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- Wage distribution by ability:

$$F_w(w | a) = \frac{1 - (w_d/w)^{1/\mu}}{1 - [w_d/w_c(a)]^{1/\mu}} \quad \text{for } w_d \leq w \leq w_c(a) \equiv b \left( \frac{a}{a_{\min}} \right)^k$$

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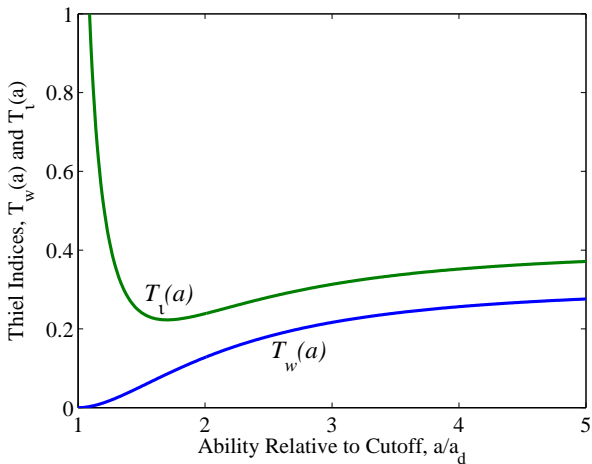
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## Proposition

*Workers with higher ability have lower expected unemployment, higher average wages and higher wage inequality. Nevertheless, income inequality for workers with higher ability can be higher or lower.*

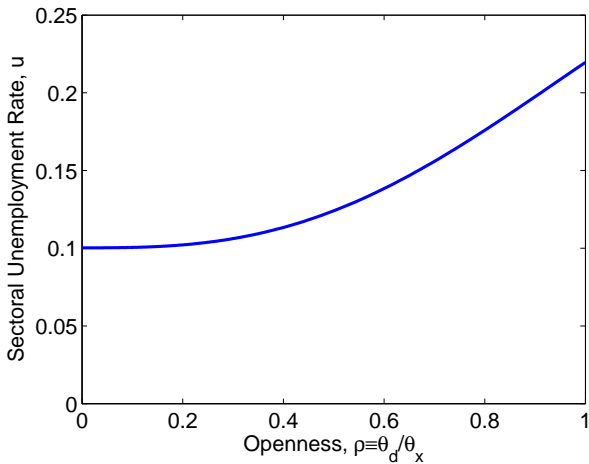
## Wage and Income Inequality by Ability



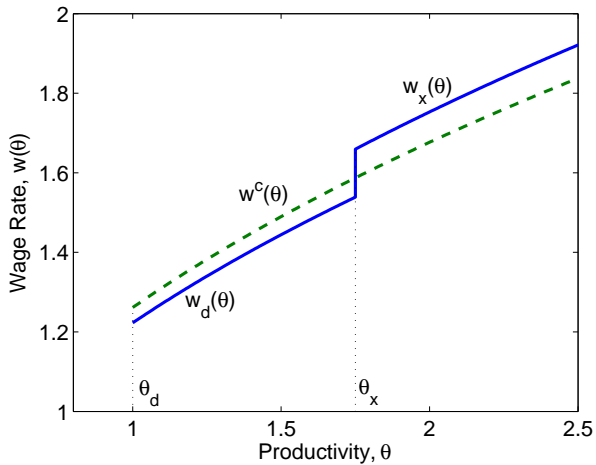
# Inequality and Unemployment in a Global Economy

- We extend the analysis to an open two-country economy
- Exports entail fixed export costs  $f_x$  and variable costs  $\tau$
- Most productive firms export ( $\theta \geq \theta_x$ ), less productive firms serve the domestic market ( $\theta_d \leq \theta < \theta_x$ ) and least productive firms exit ( $\theta < \theta_d$ )
- In equilibrium with trade, all firm-specific variables jump discontinuously for exporting firms (at  $\theta_x$ )

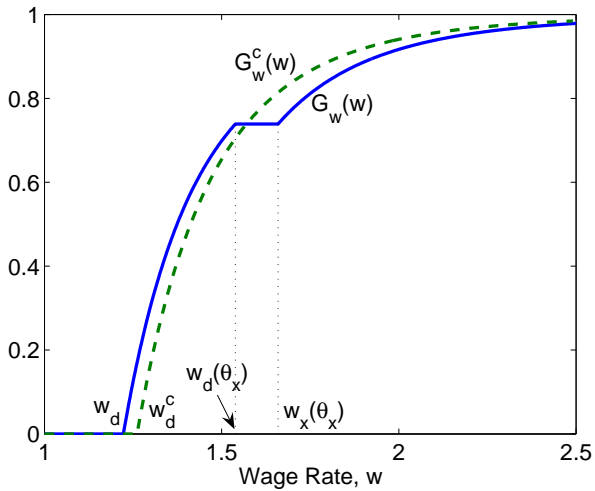
# Unemployment Rate



# Wage Profile



# Wage Distribution



## Inequality of Wages

