

Abstract

The admission process into secondary schools in the Czech Republic involves a high risk of ending up at an undesired school if failing to be admitted to one's preferred school. With future career outcomes largely dependent on the type of secondary school, the secondary school application decision is an important one. Empirical evidence gathered in this chapter is based on data on pupils participating in the OECD's PISA project and suggests that the education of parents and cognitive abilities matter for a pupil's application decision. A unique dataset available for the Czech Republic enables the examination of the role of non-cognitive skills in the admission process, and these are found to have an impact on a pupil's decision as well. The significance and the magnitude of the effect differs across districts characterized by the level of uncertainty associated with the admission process. The results of the analysis show important gender differences. One of them is that while non-cognitive skills of females operate in accordance with intuitive expectations: higher uncertainty associated with the outcome of the admission process in the district increases the importance of non-cognitive abilities with respect to decision-making; the opposite is true for males.

In following chapter, we employ the concept of *values* from psychology research and a *tradition value*, specifically, to capture national culture as "the importance of tradition and customs handed down by one's religion or family" to examine the determinants of cross-country cultural variation. In particular, we use a unique data set from the European Social Survey to explore the variation in individual preference for tradition value in a sample of people born from 1946-1985 in 34 countries. Controlling for individual socioeconomic characteristics, we find that cross-country variation in the importance of tradition is largely explained by the cross-country variation in average preference for tradition of the older generation, i.e. of people born between 1936 and 1945, suggesting a high degree of cultural stability across countries over time. Our results are robust to accounting for potential alternative channels of inter-generational transmission of tradition value, namely for economic factors and for geographical and institutional differences across countries, confirming strong cultural persistence on the national level despite new economic realities.

We also analyze the impact of cross-country migration by looking at a sample of immigrants, and find that the impact of the culture of origin on the immigrants' culture is weakening with more time passed since migration. For those who migrated more than twenty years ago and for second-generation immigrants, the culture of their country of residence is found to be more relevant in explaining their individual preference for tradition than their culture of origin, although the impact is lower than it is for non-immigrants. This suggests that the individual importance of tradition gradually succumbs to the influence of the majority and that existing differences across nations are likely to remain significant for some time to come.

In the last chapter, I use data from the European Social Survey to look at the role of traditional culture in explaining variation in the labor supply of second-generation immigrant women. I show that it is the culture of the country of residence rather than the culture of the country of origin that affects the labor participation decision of daughters of immigrants, which suggests that cultural assimilation occurs with migration. Measures of individual tradition preferences are not statistically significant in explaining the variation in labor force participation decisions.

When, however, these are expressed in terms of an individual cultural shift from the representative culture in a country of origin relative to the cultural distance between country of origin and of residence, they have a statistically significant impact on the labor participation status of second-generation immigrant women.