

Parental Gender Norms and College Major Choice: Abstract

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This paper investigates how parental gender norms affect long-term change of gender gap in college major choice in South Korea. We use sex ratios at birth in the parent's province of birth as an index of parental son preference and gender norms. The results show that daughters of earlier generations were more inclined to choose majors with high female ratios, when born to a father with conventional gender norms. However, this effect is no longer found for daughters in more recent cohorts, and no significant relationship is found for sons. For the mechanism of the diminishing influence of cultural transmission, we discuss the effects of the smaller monetary returns associated with female-dominated majors and parents' converging expectations on a child's future jobs. Our study suggests that the long-term change in conventional gender stereotypes is a major factor for the high gender segregation in college majors in the past and its decline in recent years.