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Parents' Perceptions of Occupational Fit

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Parents' Perceptions of Occupational Fit*

Abstract

We study how adolescents' second-order beliefs about their parents' occupational preferences shape gendered career aspirations. In a consequential early-career choice setting, we combine a parental choice experiment with a randomized salience intervention among students. Parents give gendered recommendations, but students substantially overestimate fathers' preference for boys to choose male-dominated occupations as well as mothers' preference for girls to choose female-dominated occupations. Making the same-gender parent salient raises aspirations for gender-congruent occupations, while highlighting the opposite-gender parent and both parents has no effect. Salience does not shift perceived occupational fit, suggesting that identity-based second-order beliefs can reinforce occupational gender segregation.

JEL classification

J16, J24, I21, C93, D91

Keywords

gender norms, second-order beliefs, occupational aspirations, parental beliefs, identity and career choice, early-career choices, choice experiment, field experiment

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