Discussion of "Female Admission Caps in Higher Education: the Case of Iran" by Baiardi, Namini, and Hering

Discussion by:
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Summary

- This paper studies the effects of gendered caps on higher-ed enrollment in Iran on:
  - Educational outcomes (↓ higher education)
  - Labor market outcomes (LFP/empl ↓ if went to university)
  - Marriage outcomes (↓ if went to university)

- Triple difference design compares variation across cities and year/cohorts with
  - Female vs. Male

- Educational effects not just from reduced number of seats available, but:
  - Poorer matching between in-demand fields and supply of seats.

- Great topic, great setting, solid data → promising paper + research area!

1. Opportunities: Peer Effects and Selection

- Class & program composition matters → peer effects in STEM
  - Bostwick & Weinberg (*Journal of Labor Economics*, 2022) on PhD program composition and completion
  - Fischer (*Labour Economics*, 2017) on intro STEM class composition and relative rank

- This a plausible mechanism in this policy setting, and interacts with selection:
  - Better female success in programs with no cap or increased female share
  - Worse female outcomes in programs which limit female participation
  - Tightening restrictions on women may increase average ability of enrollees

- Test this in the data: Table 6 but by major!
  - Ideal – administrative data on outcomes, majors, and universities, etc. etc.
  - But your data is pretty good…

- Estimate on share segr. (Tab 3 Col 8) may already support peer effects interp.

II. DDD Design Could Contain Contamination…

- DDD design compares outcomes of men with outcomes of women…

- But seats were allocated from women to men under this policy
  - This would invalidate DDD design due to contamination, SUTVA-type violations
  - Effects on men may be very small, robustness analysis indicates this may be the case, but…
  - If retain DDD, a central identification assumption becomes:

    Admissions cap policy had no effect on men.

- Ex ante, DD design seems more plausible
  - Compare before/after of women in more/less impacted regions

III. Index enforces linearity

- Main measure of treatment is an index:
  - -2: Share of programs available to women decreases by more than 10% (pp?)
  - -1: Share of programs available to women decreases by less than 10% (pp?)
  - 0: Share of programs available to women does not change
  - 1: Share of programs available to women increases by less than 10% (pp?)
  - -2: Share of programs available to women increases by more than 10% (pp?)
  - I feel these should be pp if there are not already…

- Prefer different encoding:
  - Binary/factor/fixed effect-type variables – does not enforce linear encoding
  - Continuous variable – let the data speak
  - Table C.8 contains such estimates, and they look good!

Other comments

- One finding is that main effect (↓ women in college) is not just due to reduced supply of seats; two approaches:
  1. "↓ women in college" effect is pseudo 1st stage for LFP/marriage → don't worry about it
  2. Interesting in its own right, but needs more probing!
     - Log(seats) and/or percentage change in seats to deal with scale effects of city size
     - Ideally, want something like #seats/potential applicants (denominator perhaps in city FE)

- Heterogeneity: look at effects by university ranking/quality!

- What happens to 1995 cohort in Figure 4?

- Market access-type term for college access? (Donaldson & Hornbeck 2016)