

College Expansion and Intergenerational Mobility: Examining the 1995 Higher Education Reform in South Korea

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Higher Education and Intergenerational Mobility

> Optimistic view

>> An intergenerational association becomes weaker as the offspring generation gets more education, especially a tertiary education

>>> But some rigidity among those with graduate education

>> The economic returns to higher education are greater for the socioeconomically disadvantaged than for the socioeconomically advantaged

>>> So negative selection rather than positive selection

>> A key assumption here is that the demand for the college-educated is increasingly or constantly high

>> Taken together, college expansion has a potential to mitigate social class entrenchment as a great equalizer

Higher Education and Intergenerational Mobility

> Skeptical view

>> Horizontal stratification

>>> Institutional selectivity, field of study, type of program, etc.

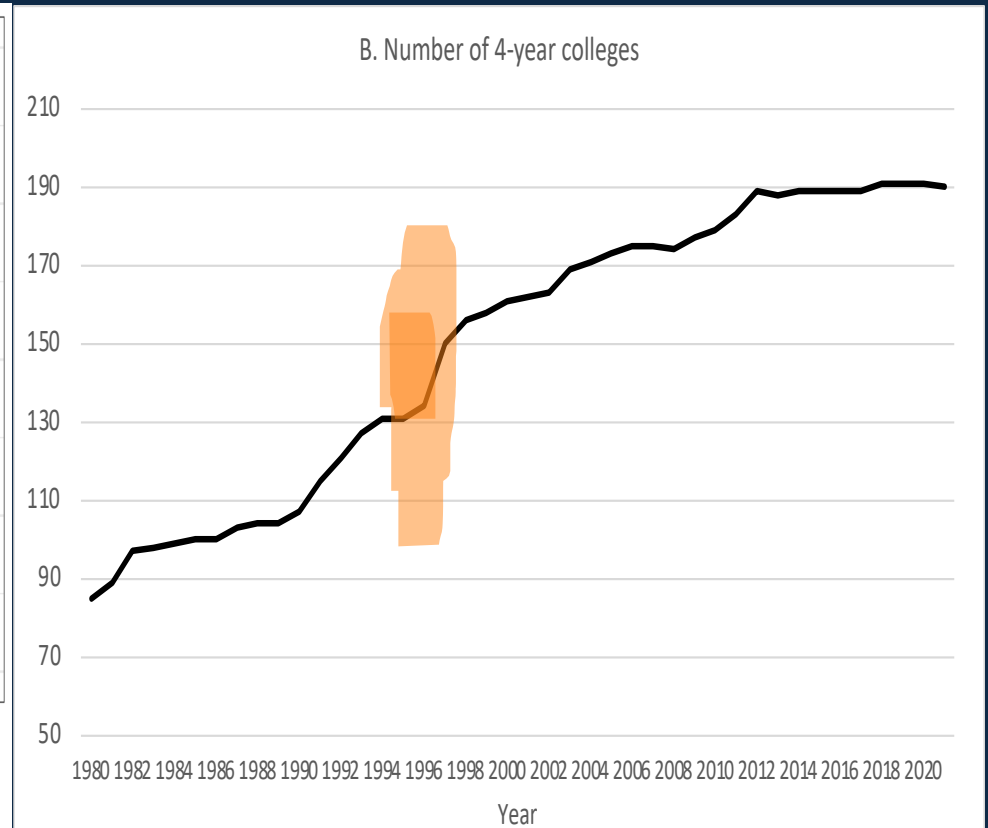
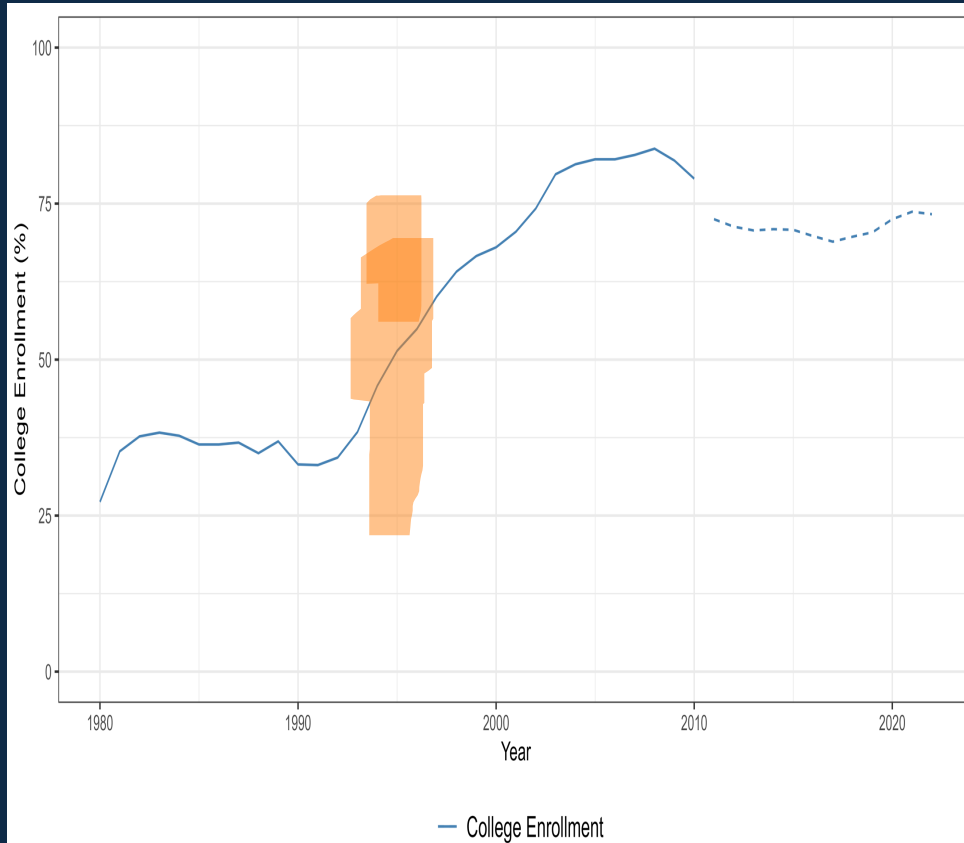
>> Higher education as a positional good

>>> From the quantitative (e.g., years of education) to the qualitative dimension (e.g., ranked educational credentials) of stratification

>> A key premise here is that the demand for the college-educated is more sorting-based in sync with the growth in tertiary education

>> Taken together, college expansion may facilitate an institutional arrangement for effectively maintained inequality

A South Korean Case



A South Korean Case

- > The 1995 Higher Education Reform
 - >> Opening more colleges and liberalizing enrollment size
 - >> State-led marketization
- > Notable features
 - >> Sharp rather than gradual
 - >> Near-saturated expansion process
- > Further considerations
 - >> This compositional change means more access to college for women
 - >> Structural mobility vs. exchange mobility
- > The scope
 - >> Mostly US and European studies
 - >> What about non-Western contexts?

Research Questions

- > What role does college expansion play in intergenerational social mobility?
- > Do the patterns vary across education and gender groups?

Analysis Plan

> Data

>> Korean Labor & Income Panel Study (KLIPS)

>>> Both pre- and post-expansion cohorts born b/w 1957 and 1991

>>> Parental and own socioeconomic status

	Pre-expansion				Post-expansion				N
	Male		Female		Male		Female		
< HS	10.1	356	16.8	475	1.4	37	1.1	26	894
HS grad	38.8	1,362	46.4	1,310	18.4	496	19.9	455	3,623
Some coll	16.6	584	15.4	433	30.8	833	31.7	725	2,575
Coll grad	26.9	947	17.4	491	42.3	1,444	40.4	924	3,506
Grad edu	7.6	266	4.0	112	7.1	192	6.8	156	726
N	3,515		2,821		2,702		2,286		11,324

Analysis Plan

> Measurement

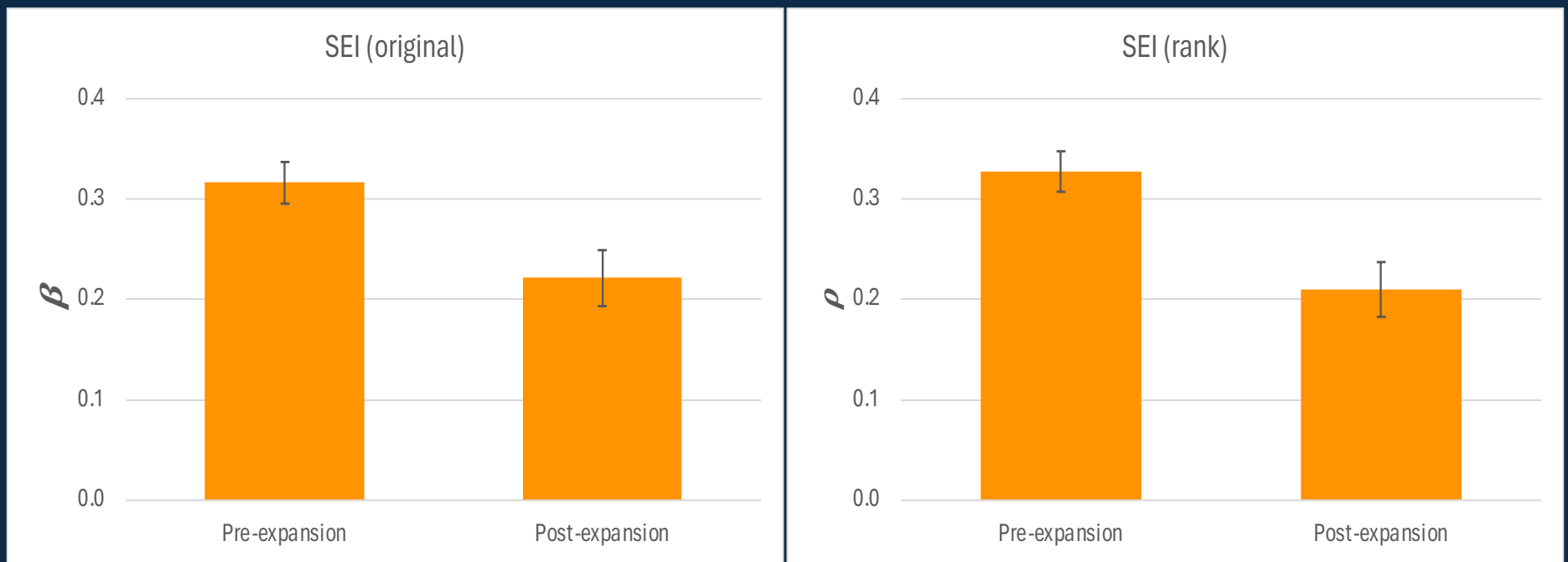
- >> Expansion cohort: pre (< 1977) and post (>= 1977)
- >> SES: International Socioeconomic Index (SEI) of occupational status
 - >>> 2000 codes based on 5th Standard Occupational Classification
 - >>> Father SEI when the offspring was 14 years old
 - >>> Own SEI averaged over ages 27-43
- >> Education: less than HS, HS grad, some coll, coll grad, and grad edu

> Model

- >>
$$o_{ijkl} = \beta_{0jkl} + \beta_{1jkl}p_{ijkl} + A_{2jkl} \times p_{ijkl} + A_{3jkl}^2 \times p_{ijkl} + \varepsilon_{ijkl}$$
- >>
$$ro_{ijkl} = \rho_{0jkl} + \rho_{1jkl}rp_{ijkl} + A_{2jkl} \times rp_{ijkl} + A_{3jkl}^2 \times rp_{ijkl} + \varepsilon_{ijkl}$$
- >> $i = \text{individual}, j = \text{educational level}, k = \text{gender}, l = \text{cohort}$
- >> Cluster-robust standard errors

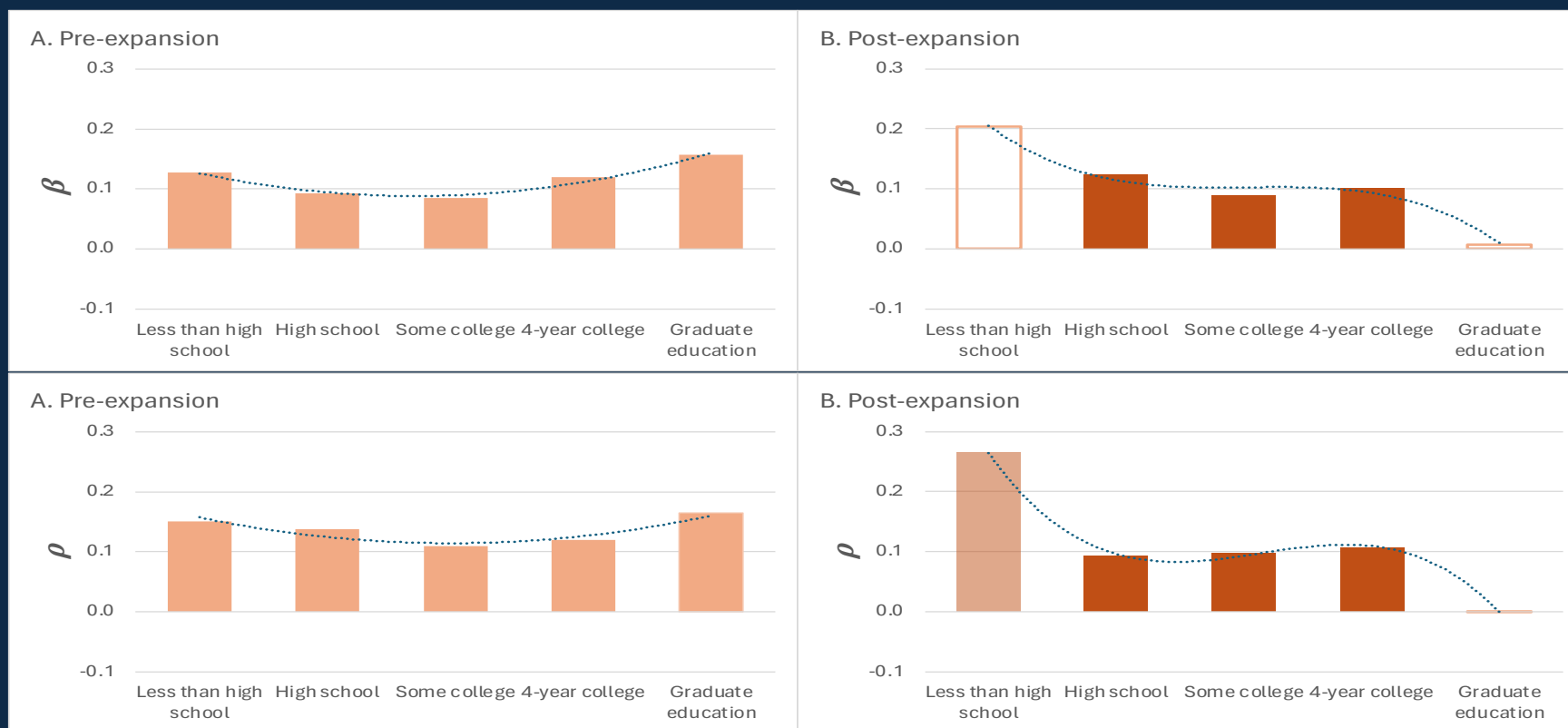
Overall Results

> Pre- vs. post-expansion comparison



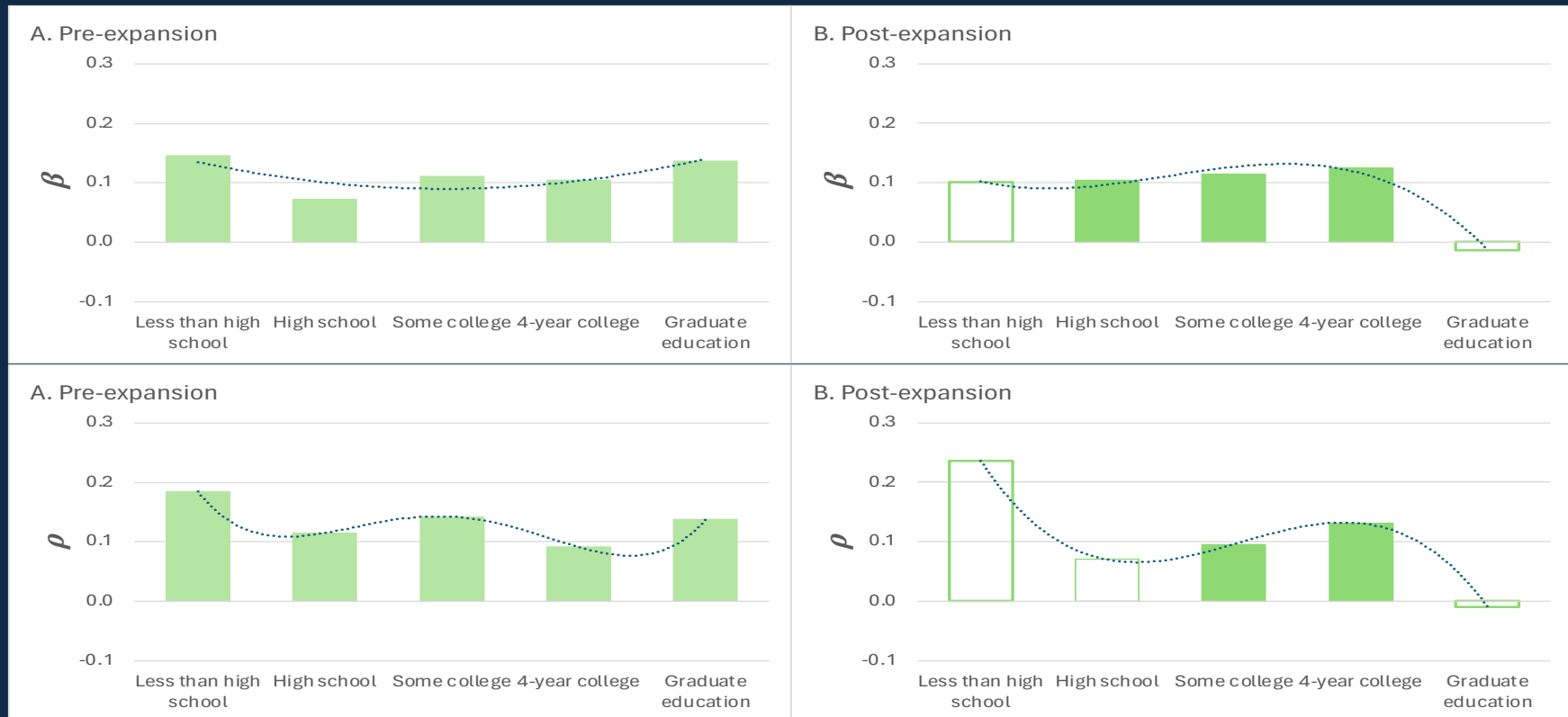
Results by Education

> Pre- vs. post-expansion comparison



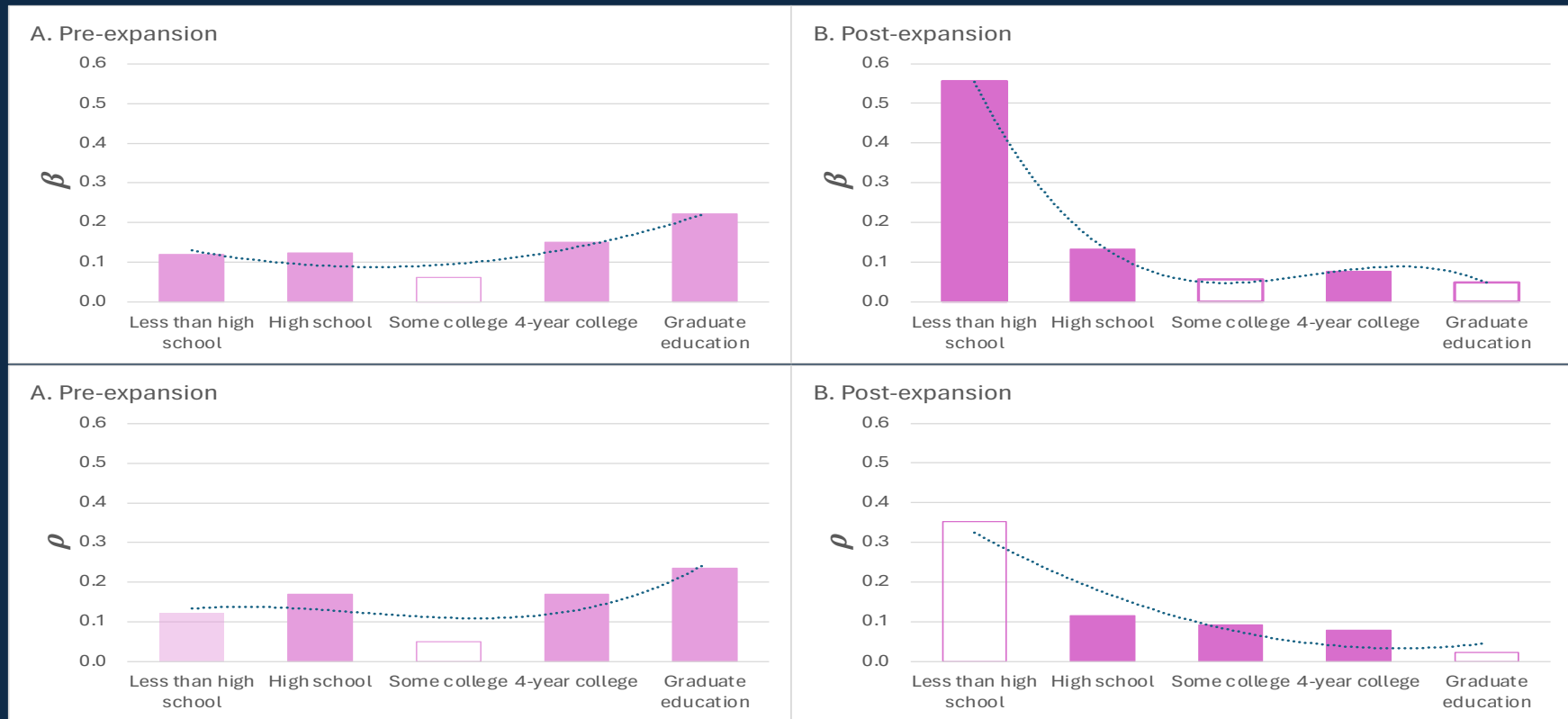
Results by Education, Male

> Pre- vs. post-expansion comparison



Results by Education, Female

> Pre- vs. post-expansion comparison



Discussion

> Summary

- >> College expansion promotes more social mobility across generations
- >> Its positive role manifests only among those with graduate education
- >> There is little change in the occupational status association between parents and offspring among those with a tertiary education
- >> College expansion appears to make the intergenerational association moderately stronger among men with a BA degree
- >> Its beneficial role is largely concentrated among women as the strength of the intergenerational association becomes weaker for the more-educated

Discussion

> Limitation

- >> SEI is just one dimension of social mobility
- >> Despite the general agreement in the findings, associating both original and rank measures of SEI across generations warrants caution
- >> College expansion in Korea is plausibly exogenous, but we cannot rule out unobserved heterogeneity

Discussion

> Implication

>> What would happen if higher education were to be nearly saturated as a result of college expansion?

>>> Overall, the positive impact of college expansion on intergenerational social mobility

>>> Yet its equalizing role of college expansion against demand-side sorting mechanisms is more likely to be observed for women than for men

>>> Less horizontal stratification in graduate education

>> More research on higher education and intergenerational mobility with attention to diverse mixtures of college expansion, horizontal stratification, and demand-side forces

THANK YOU!