

Gender Gap in Application to Selective Schools: Are Grades a Good Signal? *

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Abstract

Grades are one of the most important factors in the transition between different levels of education. However, conditional on cognitive skills, grades differ substantially between girls and boys. This gender disparity in grade assignments according to cognitive skills may create asymmetrical signals of the probability of admission for girls and boys. This paper examines the role of grades in explaining the gender difference in application rates to selective schools. Using data about transition from primary to selective schools in the Czech Republic, the paper shows that girls apply at significantly higher rates. This difference remains the same after controlling for probability of admission. Test scores collected by an international testing program have no effect on gender differences in applications that are, however, explained by grades. This finding is consistent with grades acting as a signal that provides imperfect and incomplete information about the probability of being admitted, and consequently causes the gender difference in application.

JEL classification: I21, I24

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