

Gender Inequality in Educational Attainment in South Korea, 1950s-1990s*

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Abstract

This paper investigates the effects of gender and family background on educational attainment in South Korea during the 1950s-1990s. In particular it focuses on the interplay between gender and family backgrounds in educational attainment. Previous studies tend to assume a uniform gender gap in different family backgrounds without precise analysis. Conventionally, family background inequality and gender inequality in educational attainment are regarded as the results of different social mechanisms. However, it is possible to observe that gender gaps may vary between family backgrounds.

Using the 1998 Korea Labor and Income Panel Survey data (KLIPS) this study shows that varied gender gaps exist between different family backgrounds among respondents born in 1943-1972, e.g., the gap is greater for the farming class family. On the other hand, a cohort analysis reveals that the interplay between gender and family backgrounds is different between birth cohorts. There is a uniform gender gap among those born in 1943-1952, 1953-1962 and 1963-1972. Of note, however, respondents from service class origins in the 1963-1972 cohort show no gender gap in educational attainment.

The two analyses indicate that the gender inequality is closely associated with family backgrounds. Hence, this study concludes that women's educational opportunities are affected not only in terms of gendered cultures, but also in terms of family's socio-economic situations in the 1950s-1990s.

Key words: gender inequality, social class, educational attainment, South Korea

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I . Introduction

This paper studies the interaction between gender and family background in educational attainment in South Korea during the 1950s-1990s. The international literature has documented educational inequality associated with gender and family background in industrialised societies (Goldthorpe, 2000; Halsey, Heath, and Ridge, 1980; Jonsson, Mills, and Müller, 1996; Mare, 1981; Shavit and Blossfeld (Eds.), 1993). However, since few empirical studies have investigated the possibilities of interplay between gender and family background, we know little about the potential for variances in the gender gap between upper- and lower-class family backgrounds. This academic neglect may stem from the belief that gender and family background differences in educational attainment are the results of different social forces (Jacobs, 1996; Wong, 2007). For example, the family background inequality in educational opportunities is conventionally explained by family resources and cultural capital (e.g. Boudon, 1974; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), and the gender gap by the gender ideology in either parents or societies (Jonsson et al., 1996).

A few researchers have identified different processes and implications of education between men and women. Where traditional gender role prevails and family income relies on male adult members, “investing” in sons’ education rather than daughters is often preferred (Bowman and Anderson, 1982; Kelly and Elliott, 1982; Wong, 2007). Thus, it is possible to observe a gender-class origin interaction effect, e.g., the gender inequality in education is weaker among the more prestigious social-class families in South Korea.

In advanced Western societies where the gender gap in educational attainment inequalities is minimal or non-existent, it is not necessary to consider gender-family background interaction.¹⁾ However, this may not hold true for South Korea, where women’s educational attainment lags behind men (KNSO, 2005; OECD, 2006) and traditional culture still strongly

1) Note that the gender inequality disappeared recently in some advanced societies (see OECD, 2006).

prevails during this paper's study period. Since gender gaps in educational attainment narrowed considerably after the 1990s, examining the 1950s–1990s educational period should provide concrete evidence of the educational inequality most often associated with family background and gender differences.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section describes prior research followed by an overview of education in South Korea and the theoretical considerations, and frames the research question. Section 3 details the data and method. After presenting empirical analyses of the educational inequality in Section 4, Section 5 concludes with a summary and the implications for South Korea.

II. Research Background

1. Education in South Korea: An Overview

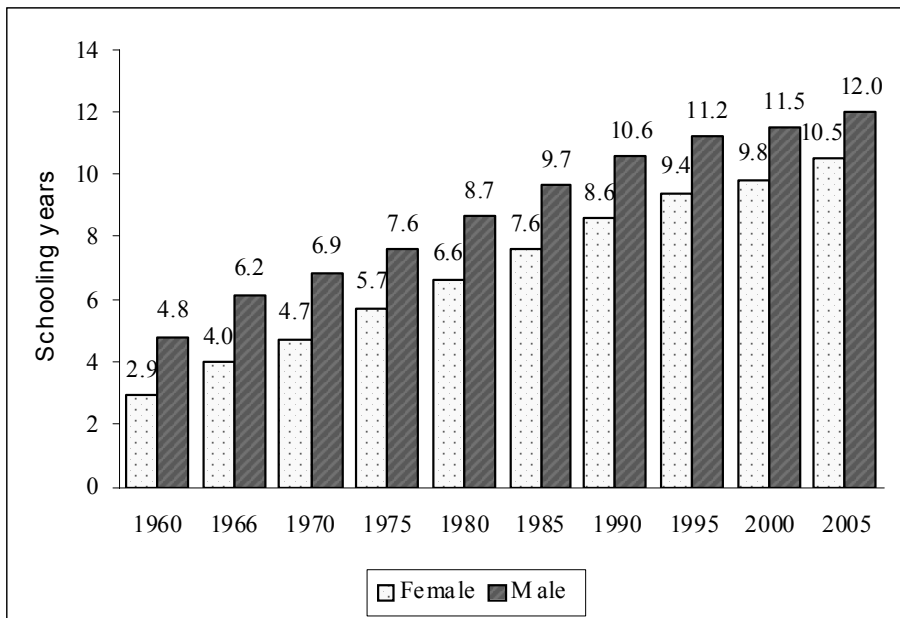
The present educational system established in 1951 consists of six years of primary schooling, three years of junior secondary schooling, three years of upper secondary schooling, and (two or) four years of tertiary schooling (i.e. two years of junior college and four years of university). This system is called the 6-3-3-4 academic year system and it is very similar to the systems used in Taiwan, Japan, and the USA (Tasi and Chiu, 1993; Treiman and Yamaguchi, 1993). A South Korean student may spend a total of sixteen years to complete university through full-time education (university education usually takes four years, but some specific schools, e.g., medical school, take six years).²⁾

Historically, formal schooling in South Korea was limited to boys from upper-class families, and resulted in extremely low levels of schooling and literacy overall. In 1945, only 22 percent of the South Korean population was

2) The ages at which students enter primary, secondary and upper-secondary schools are relatively fixed, and while the entrance age to tertiary education somewhat varies, the majority of students enter at 19 or 20 years old.

literate and the statistics were far worse for women (Ministry of Education, 1988: 51). After 1950, the pursuit of formal education spread rapidly and not long after, substantial improvement was evident in the rising educational attainment for both men and women. Primary school became compulsory in 1950, and the compulsory education level gradually increased up to junior secondary school between 1985 and 2004.³⁾ Figure 1 shows the historical trend in the mean years of schooling of adult population by gender. The mean years of schooling for men and women were 4.8 and 2.9 years in 1960, gradually increasing to 12.0 and 10.5 years in 2005 (KNSO, 2005). Although the gender gap decreased in 1960-2005, South Korean women obtained less education than men.

[Figure 1] Mean years of educational attainment, 1960-2005



Source: KNSO (2005), *Social Indicators*, each year.

3) The free compulsory junior-secondary education was introduced in 1985 first in rural areas and expanded to all of South Korea in 2004.

Age-specific education statistics also show that women's education is less than men. Based on the 2000 figure of population's education (KRIVET, 2005) the average years of schooling were 13.0 for men and 13.2 years for women 20-29 years old; 13.2 for men and 12.5 for women 30-39 years old; 12.0 for men and 10.5 years for women 40-49 years old; and 9.2 and 5.5 years old for 50 years old and over. This national statistic reveals that the gender gap is considerably large for older age groups (born before 1950) and that it began to disappear for the youngest age group (born after 1971). In summary, Korea's educational attainment has expanded since 1950 and women obtain less education than men.

Although the educational system is open to all, research documents that South Korean children from upper-class families receive higher education than those from lower-class families and women obtain less education than men (Chang, 2001, 2006; Kim, 2004; Kim, 2000; Park, 2007; Phang, 2004). Considering the gender-class origin interplay, however, a few studies are useful. Chang (2001) shows that among respondents aged 25-64 in 1990 and 1995, the effect of father's education on final schooling years is stronger for women than men, and women from self-employed class origins are more likely to obtain higher education than their male counterparts. His studies provide a basic grounding for gender-centred approaches in educational stratification analysis. However, this finding should be read carefully because of the sample's unbalanced sex-composition (about 3 (men) : 1 (women)).

Since few researchers have closely examined gender-family background interaction, little is known about its existence. Therefore, the research question is straightforward: whether the gender gap in educational attainment is the same or not between different family backgrounds.

2. Theoretical Consideration: Relationships between Family Background and Gender Inequalities in Educational Attainment

Recent sociological studies have observed no or very weak gender gaps in educational inequality in Western industrialised societies, but few researchers have examined gender-family background interactions (Blossfeld, 1993; Buchmann and Charles, 1993; Cobalti and Schizzerotto, 1993; Graff and Ganzeboom, 1993; Jonsson, 1993). This is understandable, because there may be a reduce possibility of observing a large variation between different family backgrounds where a gender gap is small and negligible. However, for South Korea we may expect to find different strengths of gender gaps in educational opportunities. The theoretical consideration of my expectation is explained below.

Conventionally, gender and family background inequalities in educational attainment are regarded as the results of different social mechanisms (cf. Wong, 2007). To obtain education, family background is the most significant determinant for children, because parents make the decision about education and bear the cost. Thus, offspring of prestigious families have benefits unless all educational levels are compulsory or saturated. Indeed, even if free primary and secondary schools are available to all, “free” education can still be inaccessible to low-income children. It is also likely that there are hidden costs:

Despite the free or small tuition fee up to secondary education, in the agricultural society, it is likely that children contribute to family economy as family workers. Thus, there are hidden costs if children are in schools. There are forgone economic contributions to the household or in other work that could yield cash (Bowman and Anderson, 1982: 12).

The important role of family economy is also explained in terms of parents’ rational choice to maximise education’s economic returns. For

example, researchers have documented that the benefits of education tend to motivate parents to invest in educating their offspring (Becker, 1991; Behrman, Pollak and Taubman, 1986; Hauser and Featherman, 1976 Wong, 2007). For families with fewer economic resources, the impact of such considerations may be particularly salient, and the situation appears worse for girls when “society” expects them to support the family unit, or when their earnings are dedicated to the education of their male siblings (e.g., Wong, 2007).

Hence, considering the importance of family economy in educating offspring, it is apparent that it affects gender inequality unless families have only one child. In fact, researchers have found that women’s educational opportunity is closely associated with family economy and parents’ gender attitudes (Bowman and Anderson, 1982; Jonsson, 1993; Kelly and Elliott, 1982 Wong, 2007).

Parents’ gender egalitarianism is also an important factor. It has been suggested that gender egalitarianism contributes to the increasing level of female educational attainment in Western societies, e.g., a decline of parental discrimination in favour of boys (Jonsson, 1993: 125). As one of the strongest Confucian societies (Kim, 1990), many South Koreans “still believe men should be more highly educated than women, although equal opportunity for education for men and women is institutionally maintained” (Park, 1991: 27).⁴ Therefore, since highly educated parents tend to hold more gender egalitarian attitudes and upper-class parents are not as dependent on their adult children later in life the gender-family backgrounds’ interaction effect should be considered a significant factor in educational stratification studies.

4) However, as society is modernised by accepting gender egalitarianism, and more parents are better educated, the traditional son/daughter discrimination in education will disappear. For example, among people 25–34 years old in 2003, there was a very small gender gap in tertiary educational attainment, yet a substantial gender gap existed for those 35–44 years old (OECD, 2006).

III. Data and Method

1. Data and Sample

The data used is taken from the 1998 Korea Labor and Income Panel Survey (KLIPS) conducted by the Korean Labor Institute (KLI). KLIPS is an annual panel survey that consists of 5,000 households and 13,321 individual household members (aged 15 and over). This paper uses the first wave of KLIPS.⁵⁾

In this analysis, 6,873 respondents aged 26 to 55 in 1998 (or born between 1943 and 1972) with no missing cases of all variables are included (i.e. 3,458 men, 50.3 percent 3,415 women, 49.7 percent). The sex and age distributions of this sample are comparable to the government's 2,000 census.

2. Statistical Method

Multivariate regression analysis by the ordinary least squares (OLS) method is applied. The general equation form of regression analysis is $Y = a + bX$, where Y is the variable being predicted, X is a variable whose values are being used to predict Y , and a is the intercept representing the value of Y (\hat{Y}) when X is zero (note that the error term is included in the constant). Hence, the equation for the estimated outcome of Y (\hat{Y}) for k numbers of explanatory variables is:

$$\hat{Y} = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + \cdots + b_kX_k$$

5) As KLIPS is panel data, the strength of the data is useful for a longitudinal study rather than a cross-sectional study. However, KLIPS contains rich information about parents' socio-economic information such as occupation and education. Moreover, it is nationally representative data with large samples. Thus, researchers are able to assign social origin classes in international contexts. Information about the survey design and sampling procedure is available in both Korean and English at <http://www.kli.re.kr>

For example, based on this simple regression equation form, the equation for the estimated schooling years in this paper is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Schooling years } (\hat{Y}) = & a \text{ (constant)} + b_1 * \text{Class origin} + b_2 * \text{Gender} \\ & + b_3 * \text{Gender} * \text{Class origin} + b_4 * \text{Single mother} \\ & \text{family} \end{aligned}$$

3. Variables

Education

The education variable is measured according to the number of completed schooling years: no education = 0, dropping primary = 3, primary completion = 6, dropping junior secondary = 7.5, junior secondary completion = 9, dropping senior secondary = 10.5, senior secondary completion = 12, dropping junior college/university = 13.5, junior college completion = 14, university and above completion = 16.

Social-class origin

Family background is conceptualised in terms of social class-origin,⁶⁾ and is measured by the occupations of respondents' fathers when the respondents are 14 years old.⁷⁾ The class classification for fathers' occupations is based on the EGP class schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992), but

6) Social scientists use different indicators to measure family backgrounds, such as parent's social class, socio-economic prestige score, and income. This paper uses parent's social class since parent's income was not available in the data.

7) Although mother's occupation is also an important factor, this paper only uses father's occupation. Given the fact that being either a family worker in the agricultural industry or a full-time housewife was common in South Korea during the time that the respondents were brought up, we expect that mother's socio-economic status will not be a significant factor. In fact, the effect of mother's education variable is examined, and few meaningful findings are observed.

modified to suit the South Korean context. For example, regarding the late industrialisation that occurred after the 1960s, the data showed that more than half of the respondents' fathers were farmers; a small number of fathers were in the service class and working class; and there were few paid agricultural labourers.

To account for the economic history of the country, this study reclassifies the seven-group version of the EGP class schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) into a five-group version for respondents' fathers: class I+II (service class), class III (routine-nonmanual class), class IVab (self-employed class), class IVc (farming class), and class V+VI+VII (manual working class). The classes are classified using the three digits of the Korea Standard Category of Occupation (KSCO) based on the 1988 Occupational Category of International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO88).⁸⁾ The modified version of the EGP class schema is depicted in Table 1.

8) KSCO is based on the 1988 Occupational Category of International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO88): "ISCO-88 organises occupations in a hierarchical framework. At the lowest level is the unit of classification-a job-which is defined as a set of tasks or duties designed to be executed by one person. Jobs are grouped into occupations according to the degree of similarity in their constituent tasks and duties. Although each job may be distinct in term of the output required from the person who executes the constituent tasks, the jobs are sufficiently similar in terms of the abilities required as inputs into these tasks for them to be regarded as a single occupational unit for statistical purposes." (<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/isco88/english>)

〈Table 1〉 The EGP class schema and the five classes of the South Korea schema

	EGP Class Schema	Five Class Korea Version
I + II	Service class: professionals, administrators, and officials; managers; higher-grade technicians; supervisors of non-manual workers	I+II (service class)
III	Routine non-manual workers; routine non-manual employees in administration and commerce; sales personnel; other rank-and-file service workers	III (routine non-manual class)
IVa+b	Petty bourgeoisie: small proprietors and artisans, etc., with and without employees	IVab (self-employed class)
IVc	Farmers: farmers and smallholders and other self-employed workers in primary production	IVc (farming class)
V+VI	Skilled workers: lower-grade technicians	V+VI+VII (manual working class)
VIIa	Non-skilled workers: semi-and unskilled manual workers (not in agriculture, etc.)	
VIIb	Agricultural labourers: agricultural and other workers in primary production	

Source: The EGP Class Schema derives from Erickson and Goldthorpe (1992).

Other researchers often combine father’s occupation and education, but as education strongly relates to occupational achievement—at least for the data used here—only father’s occupation is considered to avoid the multicollinearity problem among the predictor variables (for the multicollinearity issue between parents’ occupations and education, see Cobalti and Schizzerotto, 1993).

Gender

A female dummy variable is used. Thus, gender is coded: 0 = male and 1 = female.

Cohort

The youngest age in the sample is 26 years old at the time of interview in 1998 in order to ensure the average required years for schooling and army service imposed for South Korean males. Given the youngest age, three ten-year age cohorts are assigned: 26-35, 36-45 and 46-55. The advantage is that the older age bound ensures that the oldest has not been too affected by social turmoil (e.g., Japanese occupation (1910-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1952)). The three ten-year age (birth) cohorts are: 26-35 (1963-1972), 36-45 (1953-1962), and 46-55 (1943-1952). Table 2 shows when these age groups typically entered each educational level.

〈Table 2〉 School enrolment years of each age cohort

Age in 1998 (year of birth) Enrolment year	46-55 (1943-1952)	36-45 (1953-1962)	26-35 (1963-1972)
Primary (6 years) ¹	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979
Junior secondary (3 years)	1956-1965	1966-1975	1976-1985
Upper secondary (3 years)	1959-1968	1969-1978	1979-1988
Tertiary (2 or 4 years) ²	1962-1971	1972-1981	1982-1991

Notes: 1. Figures in brackets refer to the required number of schooling years.

2. Two years for junior college and four years for university education.

Single mother family

About 10 percent of respondents reported their mother's occupation if the father was absent or not employed. Since mother's occupation is used in some cases, this study controls for the difference by adding a single mother variable (being raised by a single mother is often more difficult economically and socially). The single mother family origin is coded 1 = single mother family origin; 0 = the non-single mother family origin.

IV. Results

1. Sample description

Male respondents obtained 12.0 schooling years and female respondents obtained 10.7 years (see Table 3). In terms of cohorts, male respondents obtained 10.9, 12.1 and 13.4 schooling years for the 1943–1952, the 1953–62 and the 1963–1972 cohorts. Female respondents obtained 8.5, 10.7 and 12.8 schooling years for the 1943–1952, the 1953–62 and the 1963–1972 cohorts. Overall, male respondents obtained more education. This gender gap was the largest in the oldest cohort, but it decreased over the cohorts: female respondents received 2.4 years fewer than male respondents among the oldest cohort, but among the youngest cohort, female respondents obtained only 0.4 years fewer than male respondents.

〈Table 3〉 Description of the sample

	All	Cohort		
		46-55	36-45	26-35
Respondent's number of schooling year	men 12.0 women 10.7	men 10.9 women 8.5	12.1 10.7	13.4 12.8
Class of Origin (percent)				
I+II (service)	8.7	5.5	8.6	11.0
III (routine non-manual)	8.2	5.6	8.5	9.8
IVab (self-employed)	14.6	11.7	13.8	17.6
IVc (farming)	57.5	71.4	60.8	44.1
V+VI+VII (working)	11.0	5.8	8.3	17.5
Single mother (percent)	9.0	10.6	8.4	8.5
<i>N</i>	<i>6,873</i> <i>(100%)</i>	<i>1,781</i> <i>(100%)</i>	<i>2,619</i> <i>(100%)</i>	<i>2,473</i> <i>(100%)</i>

Note: The age cohort composition in this data is compatible with the 2000 census.

Source: Data taken from the 1998 KLIPS.

Except for the education variable, the proportion of social-class origins and single mothers differed only slightly between male and female respondents. Hence, this paper describes the proportions of the social-class origin and single mother variables among all respondents.

More than half of the respondents' fathers were farmers or relatively small proportions of other social origin classes due to the country's late-industrialisation beginning in the 1960s. Around 9 percent of fathers were in the service class. However, reflecting the late-industrialisation, the father's class composition changed over time. For the 1943-1952 cohort, about 71 percent of the respondents' fathers were farmers; the top upper-class origins (I+II and III) were 11 percent, and working-class origin was only 5.8 percent. For the 1953-1962 cohort the proportion of the farming-class origin was still large, 60.8 percent. For the 1963-1972 cohort the proportion of the farming-class origin was 44.1 percent, a dramatic decrease. As a result, the proportions of the other social-class origins increased. A noticeable increase

appeared among the working-class origin (17.5 percent). In general, the social-class origin proportion changed across the cohorts in the direction of reducing the size of the farming class.

For the single mother variable, 9 percent of all respondents were raised by single mothers; the rate was slightly larger for the oldest cohort. Ten percent of respondents were raised by single mothers in the 1943–1952 cohort, 8.4 percent in the 1953–1962 cohort, and 8.5 percent in the 1963–1972 cohort.

2. Patterns of gender and class origin inequalities in obtained schooling years

As mentioned, this paper uses OLS regression to examine gender and class origin inequalities and the gender-class origin interaction in educational attainment. The reference category of class origin is the farming class, and the study controls for the cohort of respondents and the single mother family origin factors. The results appear in Table 4.

Model 1 reveals the conventional findings observed in previous research in South Korea and other industrialised countries: respondents of upper-class origin tend to obtain higher education, and women are likely to receive less education than men (Goldthorpe, 2000; Halsey et.al., 1980; Jonsson et.al., 1996; Mare, 1981; Shavit and Blossfeld, (Eds.), 1993). In this case women obtained 1.40 schooling years fewer than men ($p < .01$). For the other control variables, those from single mother families were likely to receive fewer educational opportunities (-0.64 , $p < .01$), and the educational attainment increased from the older respondents to the younger.

〈Table 4〉 Result of gender, social class origin effects on the schooling years

	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	s.e.	β	s.e.
Class origin				
farming class (ref.)	-		-	
service	2.73***	(0.11)	2.32***	(0.15)
routine-nonmanual	2.21***	(0.11)	2.02***	(0.16)
self-employed	1.24***	(0.10)	0.87***	(0.14)
working class	0.32**	(0.12)	-0.11	(0.16)
Female	-1.40***	(0.05)	-1.72***	(0.08)
service*female			0.82***	(0.21)
routine-nonmanual*female			0.39*	(0.21)
self-employed*female			0.76***	(0.19)
working class*female			0.94***	(0.22)
Single mother	-0.64***	(0.13)	-0.65***	(0.13)
cohort (1943-1952 ref.)				
1953-1962	1.36***	(0.11)	1.37***	(0.11)
1963-1972	2.87***	(0.10)	2.88***	(0.10)
constant	9.93***	(0.14)	10.09***	(0.10)
N	6,873		6,873	
R ²	0.286		0.289	

Note: Standard error (s.e.) refers to robust standard error.

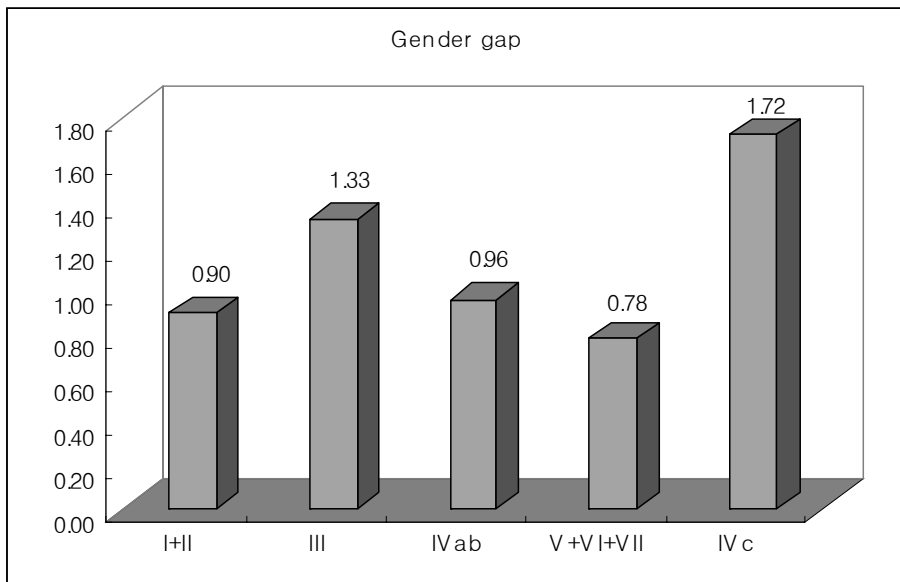
*p<.1 ** p<.05. *** p<.01.

Model 2 tests the gender-class origin interaction effect. The result is similar to Model 1 with the exception that there a statistically insignificant

difference between men of working-class and farming-class origins appears: men of working-class origin tended to receive the same education as men from farming-class families. Model 2 also reveals that a different “strength” of gender gap exists between social-class origins. This study also observes a variation in the gender-class origin interaction effect: the observed female disadvantage in Model 1 decreases considerably for those of non-farming origins, but increases for those of farming-class origin. For instance, the estimated coefficient of the schooling years was 1.72 lower for women than men of farming-class origin, yet the same figure was smaller for those of service-class origin (0.90 lower for women than for men ($= -1.72 + 0.82$)), holding all other variables constant.

For simplicity, Figure 2 shows the gender gap based on the estimated parameters of the class origin. Generally, the extent of the gender gap differs slightly different between upper- and lower-class origins except the farming-class origin.

(Figure 2) Estimated coefficient of social-class origin on schooling years obtained



Note: Figures taken from Model 2 in Table 4.

3. Trends of gender and class origin inequalities in obtained schooling years

Considering the rapid change in the father's class composition in the given period, this study also investigates changes in the effects of gender-class origin on educational attainment across birth cohorts. The results of the OLS regression appear in Table 5.

〈Table 5〉 Results of OLS regression on educational attainment

	1943-1952		1953-1962		1963-1972	
	β	s.e.	β	s.e.	β	s.e.
Class origin						
farming class (ref.)	-		-		-	
service	3.13***	(0.45)	3.06***	(0.25)	1.89***	(0.20)
routine-nonmanual	2.90***	(0.44)	2.32***	(0.28)	1.72***	(0.22)
self-employed	1.42***	(0.35)	1.05***	(0.26)	0.77***	(0.21)
working class	-0.27	(0.52)	0.18	(0.32)	0.07	(0.22)
Female	-2.70***	(0.18)	-1.65***	(0.13)	-0.91***	(0.13)
service*female	0.96	(0.64)	0.10	(0.38)	0.88***	(0.26)
routine-nonmanual*female	0.67	(0.64)	0.42	(0.38)	0.13	(0.29)
self-employed*female	0.56	(0.52)	0.76**	(0.37)	0.49	(0.27)
working class*female	1.20	(0.79)	0.49	(0.44)	0.48	(0.30)
Single mother	-0.35	(0.29)	-0.83***	(0.24)	-1.00***	(0.19)
constant	10.30***	(0.14)	11.38***	(0.11)	12.90***	(0.11)
N	1,781		2,619		2,473	
R ²	0.205		0.172		0.148	

Note: Standard error (s.e.) refers to robust standard error.

*p<.1 ** p<.05. *** p<.01.

Regarding class origin equalities, those from upper-class families tend to obtain higher education than those from lower-class families. Controlling for the effect of single mother compared to the farming-class origin respondents, respondents from the three upper-class origins are likely to receive higher education across the three cohorts. On the other hand, respondents from the working-class origin tend to obtain the same schooling years as those of farming-class origin across the cohorts. Table 5 shows that all respondents from upper-class origins tend to obtain substantially higher education, but the extent of the class inequality decreases over time.

As an example, men in the 1943–1952 cohort from service-class origins tended to receive 3.13 years more than those from farming-class origins, but the difference decreased to 3.06 years in the 1953–1962 cohort and 1.89 years in the 1963–1972 cohort, holding all other variables constant (all parameters are statistically significant at 99%). Among women the class origin inequality was similar to the pattern of men.

Based on the results of the OLS regression, women are likely to obtain less education than men among the three cohorts and the gender-social class origins interactions are statistically significant in part. For example, controlling for the single mother effect for the 1943–1952 cohort, women's estimated schooling year was 2.70 years less than that of men regardless of class origin. For the middle and youngest cohorts, this study finds similar, although smaller, gender differences. As shown, the gender parameter is -1.65 and -0.91 for the 1953–1962 and the 1963–1972 cohorts, meaning that women received less education than men across all class origins, but the gender gap decreased across the cohorts.

Of note, this study also finds gender-class origin interaction effects in certain social class origins. The gender gap is smaller for the self-employed class origin among the 1953–1962 cohort ($-1.65 + 0.76 = -0.89$, $p < 0.05$) and for the service-class origin among the 1963–1972 cohort ($-0.91 + 0.88 = -0.03$, $p < 0.01$).

The results of the cohort analysis show that the gender gap in education drops considerably over time, and the effect of the gender and class origin

interaction varies across the age cohorts. Of note, the decline in the gender gap is much larger for self-employed class and service-class families. Indeed, among the 1963-1972 cohort there was almost no gender gap for the service-class family.

V. Summary and Implications for South Korea

In most advanced industrialised countries, female disadvantages in educational attainment have largely disappeared, and in some countries it is more likely that women obtain higher levels of education than men, e.g., Finland, Iceland and Sweden (OECD, 2006). While recent figures reveal that gender differences in educational attainment have largely diminished in South Korea, nonetheless substantial gender gaps existed prior to the twenty-first century (KRIVET, 2005). Revealing the existence of these gender-class origin interactions in educational attainment is a major contribution to the literature.

Conventionally, gender gaps in educational attainment have been understood as uniform gaps regardless of family background. However, considering family background, inequality and parent's gender-attitudes for educating offspring, we would assume a weaker gender inequality in education among the more prestigious social-class families. To test this assumption, this paper has examined the gender-social class origin interaction in educational attainment in South Korea during the 1950s-1990s. Based on the 1998 KLIPS, the empirical results show that the gender-class origin interaction exists for respondents born in 1943-1972.

In summary, this study makes several significant findings: (1) educational inequality relates to social class origin; (2) the female disadvantage differs among family backgrounds, with the strongest gender gap for the farming-class origin; (3) according to the trend analysis, educational inequality related to family background persists for the 1943-1952 and 1953-1962 cohorts, but drops significantly for the 1963-1972 cohort; (4) the gender gap

decreases over time and (5) a uniform gender gap exists between social class origins across the three cohorts, with the exception that no gender gap is found for the service-class origin in the 1963–1972 cohort.

The author suggests that the finding, South Korean women receive less education than men almost to the same degree across social-class origins in the three cohorts, implies a rigid, gendered-social norm related to education. In other words, educating boys prior to girls is universal across social-class families. The country's strongly gendered culture puts women's lower educational attainment ahead of men even when the women are from upper-class families. Importantly, among the 1963–1972 cohort women and men in the service-class origin are likely to receive almost equal years of schooling. This exception is meaningful, because it shows a direction of future changes in gender and class origin effects. The result supports Chang (2006) who finds that the increase in women's higher education is mostly driven by upper-class families.

Several implications for South Korea can be drawn. First, while finding a gender gap in educational attainment is not surprising, this study reveals that gender inequality occurs unevenly across social-class origins. Women from the farming-class origin are likely to receive substantially less education than their female counterparts. The original assumption made was that unlike the limited gender/social-class origin interaction effect on educational opportunities in Western industrialised countries, South Korea would exhibit an interaction between gender and social-class origins. Using OLS regression analysis confirms that South Korean women from farming families are the most deprived group.

Second, this observed gender-social class origin interaction supports the son preference culture conjunct with the family economic explanation in the gender inequality in education. For example, among those born between 1943 and 1972 in the data, the most disadvantaged social-class origins are the farming-class (for women) while the working- and farming-classes tend to share the fewest educational opportunities (for men). This suggests that the large gender gap in farming-class origin may imply female siblings' sacrifice

for their male siblings' education. Due to a lack of separation between family home and family farms, it is highly likely that girls from farming families receive relatively less education, because they become family workers or assume responsibility for the majority of domestic work (caring for younger siblings, cooking, cleaning, etc.).

This study also suggests that this finding may be due to the likelihood that farming fathers hold more traditional views about the familial roles of their daughters. The findings indirectly show that these more traditional values result from farming fathers' own education. Based on the relationship between fathers' classes and educations in the dataset, farming fathers are less educated compared to fathers in non-farming classes. For example, 86 percent of farming fathers had only primary or no education, and only 15 percent of fathers in the service class.

This research provides an historical context for understanding the nation's educational inequality from the perspective of gender. Since parents make the decision and bear the cost of their children's education, a family's socio-economic resource is an important mechanism for gender inequalities in educational attainment.

Finding the gender-class origin interactions in educational attainment is this paper's major contribution to the literature. This research demonstrates how South Korea's gendered culture affects the strategies adopted by different social class backgrounds. If today it appears that discussing gender gaps in educational attainment is no longer topic of interest to researchers, since no gender gaps exist for young generations in South Korea (see KRIVET, 2005), the finding that the process occurs differently across family backgrounds is sociologically meaningful, because it shows that decreasing gender inequality should accompany decreasing family background inequality.

This paper has encountered some limitations. First, this study did not examine structural and institutional factors surrounding and affecting gender inequalities in education, because its focus was to examine whether gender gaps vary across different family backgrounds rather than identifying causal factors. Hence, future research should be undertaken in this area. Moreover,

this study did not test parents' sex preferences and the effect of numbers of siblings. Further study of parents' sex preferences, educational expectation for their sons/daughters, and the number of siblings in educational attainment will add to an understanding of South Korea's gender inequality.

Despite these limitations, this study lays the foundation for additional studies of gender inequality in educational attainment to be understood in terms of both gender itself and family economy.

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1950년대에서 1990년대 교육획득에 대한 성과 가족배경 차이 분석

성 문 주*

본 연구는 교육획득에 있어서 성과 출신계급 불평등을 1950년대에서 1990년대를 중심으로 살펴보았다. 본 연구의 주된 목적은 성불평등과 출신계급 불평등의 상호작용이 있는가를 실증적으로 증명하는데 있다. 21세기 현재 한국의 교육불평등을 논의할 때, 최근의 젊은 세대는 수학연수에서의 성차이가 거의 없기에 있기에 성불평등 논의의 의미성이 적을 수 있다. 그러나 해방 이후부터 1990년대 초까지 교육을 받은 세대는 여성의 낮은 교육은 부정할 수 없으며, 이러한 남녀 차이를 성차이 하나의 요인만으로 분석하기에는 부족해 보인다. 즉, 계급을 유지하거나 상승하기 위한 중요 수단인 교육이라는 인적 자본을 갖기 위한 계급간의 경쟁에서 가족내의 성별에 따른 자원배분의 차이가 있다는 것을 단순 성차이 분석으로는 설명하지 못하기 때문이다.

이러한 문제의식에서 본 연구는 가족내의 성별에 따른 교육기회불평등을 설명할 수 있는 이론과 선행 연구를 살펴보고, 성불평등을 가족배경과 연관하여 한국노동연구원의 1998년 임금노동패널(KLIPS) 자료를 이용하여 응답자의 아버지의 계급이 최종수학년도에 미친 영향을 OLS로 분석하였다. 분석 결과는 아버지가 농민인 자녀들에게서 교육불평등 정도가 컸으며, 아버지가 서비스계급인 자녀들에게서 그 정도가 작은 것이 나타났다. 이러한 분석결과를 통해 교육불평등 연구에서의 가족배경에 따라 성불평등이 다르다는 것을 밝혔다.

주제어: 교육, 성불평등, 가족배경

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