



Sex selection and parental investment: the interplay of technological and economic change

There is a long tradition of 'son preference' in South and South East Asia. Persistent neglect has resulted in decades of excess mortality of girls and women at all ages. In the last few decades, the growing availability of ultrasound technology and the legalisation of abortion in developing countries have combined with economic and demographic changes to produce pre-natal sex selection on a massive scale. For example, in the last decade in India more girls have been eliminated before birth each year than are born in the UK.

How widespread is pre-natal sex selection? Do female foeticide and gender differentiation in pre-natal care exist alongside one another? Is there evidence of differential investments after birth, for example, in the time and nutritional inputs given to girls and boys? And what kinds of families engage most in this practice?

Further afield and looking to the longer-term effects, is sex selection prevalent among Asians in the UK, the United States and Canada who, on average, are richer and face a more regulated medical environment? How do birth spacing and fertility respond to the growing incidence of sex selective abortion? Is banning pre-natal sex diagnosis effective? And what are the long-run socio-economic consequences of this unprecedented demographic squeeze working, for example, through marriage and labour markets?

The next five articles look at these issues, presenting new evidence on the prevalence of son preference at different stages pre- and post-birth. Most of the papers were presented at a workshop held at CMPO on 22 October 2010. The workshop was organised by Sonia Bhalotra and co-funded by the ESRC centre grant to

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More details on CMPO's conference on sex selection are here:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmppo/events/2010/sexselection/index.html>