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LEMMA
Laboratoire d'économie mathématique et de microéconomie appliquée

SÉMINAIRE

FEEDING THE GAP : GENDER STEREOTYPES AND FOOD CONSUMPTION - EVE COLSON-SIHRA

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Lemma - 4 rue Blaise Desgoffe, 75006 Paris. Salle Maurice Desplas

Eve is a Lecturer at the School of Economics, University of Edinburgh, and also an invited researcher at J-PAL. Her research interests span political economy, behavioral economics, trade, inequality, and identity. She will be visiting Lemma from Monday, April 12, to Friday, April 17, and again in June.

***Abstract**: When do gender stereotypes intensify? Although stereotypes affect education, occupation, and parenting, those outcomes are measured only later in life, making the initial divergence hard to identify. We use food consumption as a high-frequency revealed outcome observable from childhood onward. Using U.S. household barcode panel data, we document persistent gender differences across the food basket, including a 20% gap in red meat*

consumption. Engel-curve estimations and supplementary online surveys indicate that these gaps are not explained by physiological needs, observables, or information differences. We then link consumption to attitudinal measures and show that gender-stereotypical views mediate a substantial share of the meat gap. Turning to panel identification, we find that the meat gender gap begins in late childhood, widens sharply during adolescence, and stabilizes thereafter. This pattern is consistent with the gender-intensification hypothesis, that gender differences widen in adolescence. We corroborate our results using secondary datasets on implicit and explicit associations between gender--career and gender--science across age. Overall, consumption offers a tractable behavioral marker on when gender stereotypes emerge and intensify, with implications for the timing of equality-oriented policies and for environmental and health interventions targeting meat consumption.