

Annex I: Background research and summary of findings as an input for the guidelines towards a more Inclusive and Equitable Economics Department at the Graduate Institute

Take-away's from our 2020 workshop series

We started Women in Econ Léman wanting to better understand the role of gender in economics. In our first workshop we talked about what we know about the [experience of women at different stages of their career](#). Spoiler alert: the struggle is real. Next, we zoomed into the [leaky pipeline](#) in economics - and friends, does it leak. Then, we deep dove into less visible forms of discrimination, particularly [microaggressions and persistent social norms](#). Turns out: they are everywhere and they affect behaviour and economic outcomes massively. Three workshops later we were smarter but also discouraged. We needed to talk about avenues for improvement. So our fourth workshop was about [policy options](#) and we discussed e.g. gender quotas. Wait, what? Social norms and gender stereotypes shape behaviour and economic outcomes, but where do they originate - [nature or nurture](#)? In our fifth workshop, we talked about the importance of endogenous preferences. But whose story are we telling? [Intersectionality](#) describes how overlapping aspects of identity (e.g. gender, race and class) interact to create various systems of discrimination and privilege. In our sixth workshop, we discuss how this complexity has been largely ignored by the economics profession. And then there was [covid-19](#) - a textbook example of an exogenous asymmetric shock which brings us back a few decades ago in terms of women labor force participation. In our seventh workshop we discuss how the highly gendered allocation of time spent on house or care work holds back gender equity in response to such shocks. Finally, what better way to end a sh*tty year than to talk about [sexual harassment](#)? Our eighth workshop was heavy - it is shamefully pervasive in economics and may be rooted in a culture of aggression and a lack of accountability that trickles down from the top (omg trickle down economics DOES exist). That was 2020 - what a journey.

Here are our key take-aways:

- There is a shortage of women and under-represented minorities (URMs) in economics.
 - While around $\frac{1}{3}$ of PhDs in the US are awarded to women, only 23.5% of tenured and tenure-track faculty are women (15% full professors and 31% assistant professors). Under-represented minorities (URMs)¹ receive around 7% of PhDs and represent 6.3% of tenured and tenure-track faculty (4% full professors and 8.1% assistant professors) (Bayer and Rouse, 2016). In Europe, about $\frac{1}{3}$ of academic positions of all institutions listed in RePEc, excluding non-academic staff, is female (Women in European Economics, 2018).²
 - Women and URMs (Black, Hispanic, or Native American, and born in the US) represent only around 23% and less than 1%, respectively, of seminar speakers (Doleac and Pancotti, 2019, Doleac, Hengel and Pancotti, 2021).

¹ Individuals who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Black or African American.

² It is telling that these statistics still treat gender as a binary concept, thereby possibly omitting the marginalized group of non-binary economists. Moreover, interestingly, the gap in department gender composition is largest where the supposed 'elite' of economics is located. When looking at the top-5 economics departments by region, the percentage of female faculty members is: Africa, 35%; Latina America; 28%; Oceania, 28%; Europe, 23%; Asia, 21%; North America, 21% (Women in Economics, 2020).

- The gender gap in economics stands out from those in other STEM fields because it is stagnant, if not worsening (Bayer and Rouse, 2016). In fact, economics exhibits the largest (only) gender gap in tenure rates, salaries³ and job satisfaction compared to other math-intensive fields (Ceci, Ginther, Kahn, and Williams 2014; Ginther and Kahn, 2021).
- The gap starts early-on with students having a perception that economics is a business-oriented field that prioritizes math skills and making money. Interventions that emphasize the link to e.g. social and health issues could go a long way in diversifying the pool of economics students early on (Bansak and Starr, 2010; Buckles, 2019).
- Once in the undergrad, women and URMs are severely underrepresented in economics textbooks' fictionalized accounts, choices of pronoun, and in the real people that are used to illustrate points made, adding to a lack of relatability for under-represented groups (Stevenson and Zlotnick, 2018).
- There is a lack of women role models for women and URMs at every stage of their career. This is problematic because the presence of role models through supervising and mentoring has shown to mitigate the leaky pipeline e.g. by generating a sense of belonging and legitimacy for juniors from under-represented groups and improving their networks (Canaan and Mouganie, 2021; Ginther and Na, 2021; Ginther, Currie, Blau, and Croson, 2020; Buckles, 2019; Dee, 2005).
- Nudges in the form of heartfelt positive feedback on academic performance can help to retain women and URM candidates in economics (Bedard, Dodd and Lundberg, 2021)
- Sexual harassment is a big issue for and burden on individuals, especially women graduate students and juniors in academic economics who find themselves in steep power relationships amid relationship-contingent career prospects.
 - In a 2015 survey of 27 institutions of higher learning, 44% of graduate and professional women students and 30% of men reported experiencing sexual harassment; of those, 16% of women and 11% of men say that the perpetrator was a teacher or advisor (Cantor et al. 2017).
 - There is a central accountability issue in economics, with a widespread perception that victims will be blamed and perpetrators not be held accountable for their abusive behaviour (Lundberg, 2018).⁴
- Women face a more hostile, patronizing and less constructive conference, seminar and job market environment than the average economist (Dupas, Modestino, Niederle and Wolfers,

³ Female full professor salaries in economics as a proportion of male salaries dropped from 95 percent in 1995 to less than 75 percent in 2010 (Ceci, Ginther, Kahn, and Williams, 2014).

⁴ *"In recent years, there have been many well-publicized allegations that university faculty members have sexually harassed and assaulted students and colleagues, including cases with multiple victims and many in which this behavior went unreported for many years for fear of negative career consequences. (...) I have heard enough stories, both first-hand and second-hand, to know that harassment, assault, and other sexual misconduct are significant problems in our field as well. In none of these cases were the victims willing to file a formal complaint, **knowing that disbelief, malicious gossip, and retaliation were likely to be the consequences of coming forward.** Victims are disadvantaged in a hierarchical work environment in which subjective assessments of ability and research quality are crucial to professional success, and may leave jobs or the field in response to harassment."* (Shelly Lundberg in the AEA Newsletter 2018, Issue I)

2021).

- Women are often expected to make personal choices that conflict with their professional success:
 - The time allocation of care work at home is highly gendered (Titan, Doepke, Olmstead-Rumsey and Tertilt, 2020).
 - Women in academic economics tend to make mobility choices that negatively impact their careers while the opposite is true for men (Hilmer and Hilmer, 2010).
 - Child bearing likely pushes some women out of academia (Joecks, Pull and Backes-Gellner, 2014)⁵
- These choices can be explained by the prescriptive, as opposed to descriptive, nature of gender stereotypes, which are defined as beliefs shared by women and men about what/how women and men should do/be and which leads individuals to adjust their self view to what seems appropriate for their gender group (Bertrand, 2020).⁶
 - Some have argued that women and men draw from a different distribution of skill or preference at birth. However, average gender differences in skills or traits are typically very small in comparison with the large within-gender variation in these skills or traits (Bertrand, 2020). Moreover, nation-level sex differences in 8th-grade science and mathematics achievements can be explained by nation-level implicit stereotypes, suggesting that they represent a central driver (Nosek et al., 2009).
 - This suggests that observed differences in interests and skills across genders should not be viewed as set in stone but as largely socially constructed. What does this mean?
 - Girls and boys early on learn about gender stereotypes through e.g. gendered parenting (Brenøe, 2018; Endendijk et al., 2014) and peer interactions (Fiske and Stevens 1993). Specifically, they learn about what their parents think is appropriate for them, what type of behaviour is expected and appreciated by peers and that deviating from stereotypes may lead to discontent by parents, exclusion from social circles and bullying.
 - As a result, girls and boys adjust their self view to comply with these stereotypes to be respected and included as a group member (Ellemers 2018).

⁵ Fun fact: until earlier this year, men in Switzerland would get two days off for moving houses but only one for becoming a father - do Swiss kids get born with a "don't need no man" attitude or is this simply cruel to both child and father, not to mention the massive and singular burden on mothers?

⁶ This is in stark contrast to the way economists traditionally thought about stereotypes, that is, as a consequence of statistical discrimination on the basis of a signal extraction problem. In such a context, stereotypes are rational beliefs about a group member based on the aggregate distribution in the gender group. Moreover, economists usually emphasize their descriptive nature in that they provide valuable information about the typical traits of a man or a woman. However, this view is incomplete and misguided. Rather, stereotypes in social psychology are thought of as (not necessarily rational) generalizations that individuals make to save on cognitive resources and that therefore do *not* provide valuable information about the true characteristics of an individual but rather, serve to *shape preferences* by *prescribing* how members of a group *should* be (Bertrand, 2020).

The channels can be summarized by:

- Gender norms are fully internalized and part of one's self conception (stereotypes in the utility function).
 - fear of reputational consequences of deviating from social norms (stereotypes as a constraint).
- This implies that rational self-interest translates into individuals engaging in tasks to comply with gender identity norms (endogenous preferences) which are therefore self-fulfilling, regardless of the beliefs of others.⁷ Examples include:
- Women who earn more money than their partners tend to increase rather than decrease the time they spend on household chores (Bertrand, Kamenica, and Pan 2015).
 - Women in heterosexual couples tend to under-report their income in surveys when they outearn their partner (Roth and Slotwinski, 2020).
 - Literature on stereotype threats indicates a strong connection between gender stereotypes and underperformance in counter-stereotypical domains (Koenig and Eagly 2005) because of a subconscious barrier stereotyped individuals fall prey to as cognitive resources spent fighting stress and negative emotions (Schmader and Johns 2003) or being concerned with social image (Ståhl et al. 2012) prevents them from fully focusing on the task at hand.
- An apparent controversy is that women who live in the most sexist places tend to exhibit slightly higher relative life satisfaction as measured by surveys. However, this can be explained by women in these places having internalized that they e.g. 'should not' work whereby gender identity norms, though constraining behavior and choice, are no longer perceived as constraints (Bertrand, 2020).⁸
- To overcome this central bottleneck, the stereotype trap, we find ourselves in a cat and mouse game: while counter stereotypical performance seems to be key for changing stereotypes, the stereotypes themselves make it difficult to achieve precisely this (Bertrand, 2020).
 - However, quotas have been shown to increase the quality pool of politicians by excluding 'mediocre' individuals by more qualified women. The effect is persistent because it shapes social norms through overcoming sexist inertia and role model effects - something that likely applies to other settings as well (Besley, Fole, Persson

⁷ Note that even purely statistical discrimination may depress investment in skills by members of the stereotyped group because members of that group rationally believe that these investments will not be fully rewarded due to statistical discrimination (Lundberg and Startz, 1983). However, this view is incomplete (Bertrand, 2020).

⁸ An important follow-up question is then whether the concept of utility is a good one for measuring well-being as it fails to account for the central feature of 'capabilities', i.e. *opportunities* for achievements, rather than the achievements themselves (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2001).

and Rickne, 2017; Baltrunaite, Bello, Casarico and Profeta, 2014).

- Women who pursue a career in economics despite these societal barriers face an uphill battle against subconscious biases that is reflective of the prescriptive (as opposed to descriptive) role gender plays in people's minds and results in a worse performance assessment of women, even when they have demonstrated competence and success at the task at hand.
 - Women face an 'impossible binity' of balancing the need to be perceived as both competent *and* nice when
 - rising to leadership positions (Rudman and Glick, 2001).⁹
 - being successful at a distinctly in an area that is distinctly male in character (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins, 2004).
 - Failure to do so results in women being less liked and more personally derogated than equally performing men which may result in them obtaining worse evaluations and fewer organizational rewards (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins, 2004).
 - It is often said that women should 'lean in' and 'negotiate more' but, while women do negotiate less than men, they only do so when it benefits them (Exley, Linman, Niederle and Vesterlund, 2019). Often, women face backlash for negotiating on their own behalf (Amanatullah and Tinsley, 2013).
- Even when faced with an unbiased hiring committee, women may appear less qualified than they truly are (Buckles, 2019).
 - Recommendation letters for women are less likely to refer to their ability or agency (Madera, Hebl, and Martin 2009).
 - Students evaluate female instructors more harshly (MacNeill, Driscoll, and Hunt, 2015).
 - Women are held to higher standards in the peer-review process and therefore publish less in the highest ranking journals (Card, DellaVigna, Funk, and Iriberry, 2020; Hengel, 2020). When they do, they get less credit for co-authored work than their male co-authors (Sarsons, 2017).
 - Papers by women in top economic journals are less likely to be cited by top-tier journals and less likely to be cited by men (Koffi, 2021).
 - Women have to meet higher standards than men to be accepted into career-decisive networks such as the NBER (Kleemans and Thornton, 2021).
 - Women may appear less capable than equally qualified men due to the way they present themselves and their work:
 - There is a gender self-promotion gap which starts as early as sixth grade where

⁹ More specifically: "(...) women have to fight implicit (i.e. subconscious) beliefs as they attempt to rise to authority and leadership positions. (...) The prescription to "be feminine" while simultaneously fulfilling agentic requisites is akin to walking a delicate tightrope, where the consequences of losing one's balance are both social and economic. By placing women in double jeopardy, the mandate to "direct while not being directive" is also costly psychologically and in terms of mental resources." (Rudman and Glick, 2001).

women tend to subjectively evaluate their work quality less favourable than equally performing men, whether economic incentives to self-promote are present or not (Exley and Kessler, 2019).

- Women tend to be less confident than men in expressing a strong opinion when asked to do so outside their field of expertise (Sarsons and Guo, 2021).
- Women and URMs are more likely than men to be asked to volunteer and accept requests to volunteer for low-promotable tasks that need to be done. This result is driven by a belief that women are more likely to say yes to taking care of such tasks (Babcock, Recalde, Vesterlund, Weingart, 2017; Williams and Multhaup, 2018).
- As a result, women's career progression in economics is slower and there is a severe salary gap.
 - Women in economics were 15% less likely to be promoted to associate professor after controlling for cumulative publications, citations, grants, and grant dollars, whereas there was no such promotion gap in other fields including biomedical science, physical science, political science, mathematics and statistics, and engineering (Ginther and Kahn, 2021)
 - The gender wage gap grows with the length of time an individual has been in the profession and emerges roughly 10 years after the start of one's career (Bedard, Lee and Royer, 2021).
- There is substantial heterogeneity in the experience of women at different intersections of gender with other identity layers such as sex, race, class, caste, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, height, (...) which creates a complex system of privilege and lack thereof.¹⁰
 - For example, when we talk about 'women in economics' and the lack of gender equality in the profession, we often refer to the struggle of white cis-gendered women, a subgroup of women which, because of e.g. widespread (sub-)conscious racism and homophobia, are relatively privileged with respect to women of color or queer women. In neglecting e.g. the fluidity gender represents for some women as well as the interaction between gender and race, we are overwriting the lived experience of individuals from these under-represented sub-groups, thereby proliferating 'white privilege' and heteronormativity. This is an injustice to those women and true inclusivity cannot co-exist with such acts of aggression/oblivion. To achieve the latter, all voices need to be heard and the heterogeneity in the degree of struggle for belonging and acknowledgement needs to be considered.
 - There are also institutional barriers to true inclusiveness that manifests itself in the commercialized practice of including individuals from under-represented groups while still treating them as 'others', rather than adjusting the learning environment and curricula to respect and embrace the presence and history of these individuals, by e.g.

¹⁰ Intersectionality are "social identities, which serve as an organizational feature of social relations, that mutually constitute, reinforce and naturalize one another" (Shields, 2008).

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¹¹ "In a visceral political 'colour-blind' climate where 'race' is deemed 'off the agenda', new patterns of insidious racism and deep inequalities are evolving in the 'affective' learning landscapes, or 'eduscapes' of our seemingly cosmopolitan but inherently white elitist universities (...). In the commodified global industry of higher education, the challenge for our institutions in 'post-race' times is to move beyond the entrenched equalities discourse where institutional diversity is seen as 'good business sense' achieved through 'targeting' the bodies of raced and gendered 'others' to 'get them in the door'. 'Real' diversity in democratic societies has to be a moral and legal imperative which fundamentally changes our pedagogy and moves us towards a decolonised practice that embraces 'other ways of knowing' and being for all." (Mirza, 2018).

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