

Luncheon Notes
November 14, 2018

Diversity in Economics

Hosted by:

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This luncheon was held in order to disseminate information and continue the conversation started at the 2018 [Graduate Student Summit on Diversity in Economics](#), hosted by the Women in Economics at Berkeley (WEB) on September 28th-29th on the UC Berkeley campus, which brought together 130 graduate students and 30 scholars from over 40 institutions for workshops, presentations and panel discussions. Anne Byrne (PhD student, AEM) and Stephanie Schauder (PhD student, ECON) represented Cornell at the summit. This newsletter is to inform the Cornell Economics community about the information provided at the summit as well as the ideas that came out of the follow-up luncheon at Cornell, held on November 14.

The State of Diversity in Economics

At the Berkeley Summit, Prof. Shelly Lundberg (chair, Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession) presented news and numbers on the status of diversity in academic economics departments. Stephanie Schauder presented this information at Cornell. It should be noted:

- There is more information on the issues facing women in the economics profession than on the issues facing underrepresented minorities because there is sufficient data to study gender disparities. Because there are so few underrepresented minorities in the academic pipeline in Economics (particularly at senior levels), it is often difficult, if not impossible, to perform research without compromising privacy.
- The numbers presented are on traditional economics programs and do not include policy departments or agricultural/resource/applied economics departments. However, Prof. Lundberg and others who have conducted this research believes the underlying issues are likely to exist in these similar departments.

Rather than compiling all the information from the summit and luncheon, we have highlighted what we believe are seven important facts that illustrate the status of diversity in economics:

#1: Representation of women among faculty and graduate students is lower and more stagnant in Economics than in many STEM fields.

There is a perception that the quantitative nature of Economics leads women to select out of the field, however representation is actually worse in Economics than in most STEM fields. Ceci et al. (2014) did a comprehensive study of “Women in Academic Science” and examined gender differences across STEM/science fields, including Economics; they found that “economics is an outlier, with a persistent sex gap in promotion that cannot readily be explained by productivity differences.” They also found that of the 24 science subjects of interest, economics was one of only six fields in which men have salaries that are significantly greater than women. As noted by Prof. Lundberg, the stalled progress in Economics means “it’s not just about math or babies;” there appears to be something more at play in Economics. Furthermore, [studies have found](#) that gender-neutral policies, specifically those surrounding tenure clock extensions for parental leave, have “advanced the careers of male economists, often at women’s expense.”

“Economics is an outlier, with a persistent sex gap in promotion that cannot readily be explained by productivity differences.”

-Ceci et al. (2014)

#2: Representation of black students in Economics programs has decreased since 1995 and remains below STEM fields

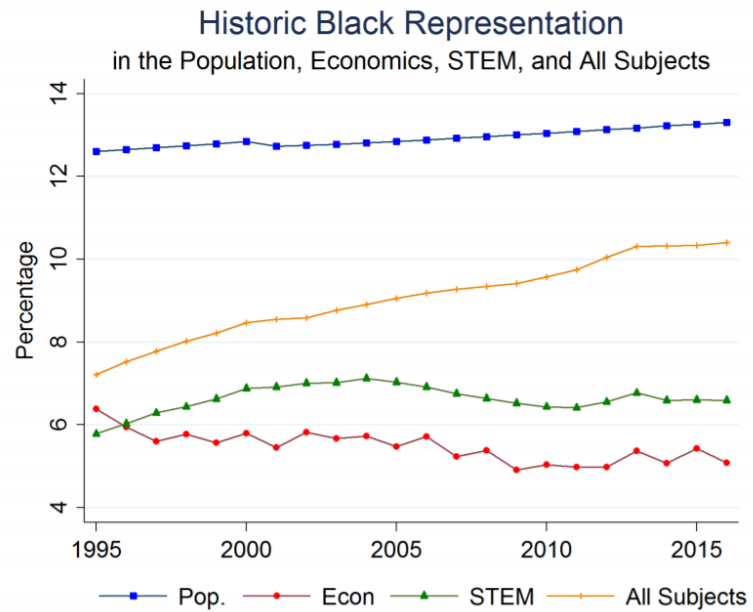


Figure 2: Changes in Representation of Blacks/African Americans. This figure shows the percentage of the Black/African American population within the total population along with the percentage of economics degrees, STEM degrees, and degrees in all subjects awarded to Black/African American students from 1995 to 2016.

From Ceci, et al. (2014)

#3: Male and female economists have a tendency to study different research questions

Many in the field have long been aware of the over-representation of female economists in labor and public economics; this has been and remains true. Prof. Lundberg noted that in surveys conducted by the AEA, male and female economists tend to agree on methodology but differ in their assessment of what questions are important to answer. Furthermore, she pointed out that while women are underrepresented in the field, their research seems to be gaining an increasing amount of attention; a recent article on the [economics research that shaped our world](#) discussed thirteen groundbreaking studies in the field- four were authored by women and an additional four had at least one female coauthor.

#4: The publishing world is tougher on women

In her paper published in the *American Economic Review* (2017), Dr. Heather Sarsons found that women are less likely to receive tenure the more they coauthor; the result is “much less pronounced among women who coauthor with other women.” There is also evidence from Hengel (2017) that women are held to a significantly higher standard in publishing, with text analysis showing that economics articles written by women score higher on readability tests but spend longer in peer review. Furthermore, while publications by single, childless females and single, childless males in many STEM fields are not significantly different, a disparity in publications between these two groups *does* exist in Economics.

“Women are outnumbered among full professors at so-called top twenty economics departments by a ratio of six to one.”

-Justin Wolfers in “Why Women’s Voices Are Scarce in Economics” (NY Times)

#5: Issues of online harassment and sexism in economics have been demonstrated in the literature; AEA has responded

In her 2018 paper, Harvard PhD candidate Alice Wu demonstrated the gendered language and sometimes toxic culture in the online platform *Economics Job Market Rumors*, a once heavily trafficked site used by early career economists to anonymously discuss the field. The AEA responded by creating its own (monitored) job market forum.

Most “female”		Most “male”	
Word	Marginal Effect	Word	Marginal Effect
hotter	0.388	homosexual	-0.237
hot	0.285	homo	-0.228
attractive	0.260	philosopher	-0.204
pregnant	0.252	keen	-0.182
gorgeous	0.251	motivated	-0.171
beautiful	0.249	fieckers	-0.164
tits	0.247	slides	-0.160
lesbian	0.242	nordic	-0.156
bang	0.229	filling	-0.152
horny	0.224	textbook	-0.148
slept	0.224	adviser	-0.140
marry	0.221	fenance	-0.138
attracted	0.216	fiekers	-0.137
0,0	0.213	bowl	-0.136
cute	0.209	gay	-0.132
breasts	0.205	bench	-0.129
sexy	0.202	mountain	-0.128
pregnancy	0.195	humble	-0.124
dumped	0.194	iraq	-0.122
feminazi	0.189	rust	-0.121
feminist	0.187	amusing	-0.120
raped	0.185	speeches	-0.119
dated	0.184	affected	-0.119
cheerful	0.182	mere	-0.119
ugly	0.179	chill	-0.118
marrying	0.178	bugs	-0.118
blonde	0.175	rip	-0.113
crush	0.173	recession	-0.111
date	0.172	brilliant	-0.108
naked	0.172	salmon	-0.108

From Wu (2018): Words with the strongest predictive power for whether or not a post discussed a female in EJMR posts discussing fellow economists

#6: Women are much less likely to ask questions in academic seminars than men

[Previous studies](#) have shown large gender disparities in whose voices are heard during seminars. Researchers at Stanford University are currently investigating gender differences specifically in Economics seminars; stay tuned for results.

#7: A third of male economists believe that opportunities in the US favor female economists

A 2008 survey conducted by the AEA found major differences between the genders of who is benefitting from the status quo. While 76% of women in the organization believe that opportunities in economics favor men, only 20% of men in the organization shared that view while a third of men felt that the opportunities favor women.

“Some of us came to Cornell because of the representation of women, so we felt more comfortable in the department.”

-Diversity in Economics at Cornell Luncheon attendee

Diversity in Economics at Cornell: Notes from the Luncheon

The luncheon attendees included graduate students and faculty members from AEM, PAM and ECON. We discussed the state of diversity in our respective departments at Cornell in the following contexts. A summary of comments from participants is provided:

Classes

- Classes are often the primary means by which students develop an impression the department and, in many cases, the field in general.
- Female and minority role models are incredibly valuable but also scarce. In particular, the departments do not seem to be effectively recruiting and including black students.
- Professors and instructors sometimes reward behavior that reinforces whose voices are valuable (e.g. allowing certain students to dominate the conversation)
- Textbooks are a missed opportunity; examples of economic phenomena could easily be more representative than they are.

Seminars

- A greater diversity of visiting/guest speakers would be great.
- It seems that women have to meet a higher bar when presenting- they are asked more questions and the questions seem to be more vicious. Men seem to ask more questions and interrupt more.
- Our job market and seminar presentation training are lacking in preparing us for the ways in which we may be perceived differently based on how we look (too much of a one-size-fits-all approach to presentation style tips).

Recruitment of New Students

- It's important to approach students before they apply; students who come from backgrounds where they don't know anyone with a PhD may not know about funding or job opportunities.
- GRE tends to favor students from higher socio-economic statuses, which is problematic. Admissions should take this into account.
- It's important to make sure that hosting students know about resources and are equipped to recruit students from diverse backgrounds during visit days.
- Many of us chose Cornell specifically because our department signaled a dedication to gender equity- it was emphasized in acceptance letters and at visit days and clear from the number of women already in the program.
- We should recruit at summer programs for high school and undergraduate students that target underrepresented groups. Introductory classes really set the tone for what students can expect from a department or field.

Conferences

- It feels tricky to have informal conversations at conferences as a woman- feels like there is pressure to be more serious, not discuss your family too much, don't get too friendly so as to avoid the appearance of being flirtatious or inappropriate.
- Conference attendance can be tough when you have family obligations, but it's such an important part of professional development.

Search Committees and the Job Market

- It's difficult to know when to mention the "dual body problem."
- It feels like Cornell is being more conscious of partners as more families are dual-earner households. Ithaca is a challenging place to recruit to because Cornell is the biggest employer and candidates may be more reliant on spousal accommodation from the university than they would be in a bigger city.
- The research shows unconscious bias against women, but that doesn't mean that search committees will adjust. It's frustrating to see so many women flown out for the most recent round of new hiring in my department, but then ultimately no women given positions.
- It seems like my department is willing to invest in senior women professors, but less willing to take a chance on pre-tenure women.

Informal Networking

- Formalizing networking instead of expecting it to happen informally can help; e.g. setting up events that are structured for professors to "speed mentor" students (5-minute rotating research conversations) is more inclusive than asking students to approach professors on their own.
- There appears to be a trend of young male professors becoming "buddies" with male graduate students, which can feel very exclusive; this seems to be a problem at other schools too.
- Events that are focused on alcohol can be difficult because you don't want to miss networking opportunities, but you also don't want things to get uncomfortable or inappropriate.

Next Steps

Based on the information from the WEB Summit and the Diversity in Economics Luncheon at Cornell, we recommend the following net steps:

- Professional development for speaking and seminar skills that is tailored to a diverse audience or job market candidates and early career professionals
- Additional conversations that include a more representative portion of the Cornell economics community; the luncheon felt a bit like we were preaching to the choir and there is a desire to increase buy-in from those who weren't present

Thank You!

We would like to thank the Women in Economics at Berkeley for providing programming and partial funding for our attendance. We also want to thank Prof. Francine Blau in the Economics Department and Prof. Todd Schmit in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for the Johnson College of Business for providing funding support for our summit attendance and for the luncheon hosted at Cornell. Finally, we want to thank the administrative staff in the Dyson School at Cornell for their support in coordinating, hosting, and catering the luncheon
