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# Prof says 'male-dominated' textbooks deter women from Econ



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- A University of Michigan professor recently presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association arguing that "male-dominated" textbooks may be partly to blame for the lack of women in the field.
- Betsey Stevenson found that 77% of the people represented in 8 leading texts are male, and concluded that "concrete steps" are needed to make textbooks "reflect the diversity of the student body we would ideally like to attract."



**A** University of Michigan professor recently argued that the lack of women in Economics textbooks could help explain why few females pursue the field.

Associate Economics professor **Betsey Stevenson** and **Hanna Zlotnick**, a Master of Public Policy candidate, recently reviewed the depictions women and men in eight leading economics textbooks, finding that 77 percent of people represented in those textbooks were male.

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The gender disparity was even more pronounced for specific mentions of economics, Stevenson and Zlotnick discovered, reporting that male economists outnumber women 12-to-1 overall, and that in one particular textbook, there were no female economists to be found.

They also discovered that textbooks often depict men “making a decision,” while women are often illustrated as “[having] a decision made for them.”

Stevenson and Zlotnick argue that this gender-disparity could help explain why women aren’t attracted to the field.

“One could argue that textbooks not only should be representative of the actual world, but reflect the diversity of the student body we would ideally like to attract.”

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“This fact both makes it likely that economics textbooks are male-dominated and suggests that concrete steps need to be taken to understand why economics is not attracting female students,” they write, adding that “one part of the answer may be that women do not see themselves, their interests, and their lives described in economics textbooks.”

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Lamenting the fact that textbooks are overwhelmingly male, the professors also argue that textbooks should be “forward-looking” instead, representing the gender diversity they wish Economics would attract instead of reflecting the current situation.

“Additionally, one might argue that all types of students should be able to see themselves and their lives reflected in the examples and discussions they see when they study economics,” they write. “Therefore, one could argue that textbooks not only should be representative of the actual world, but reflect the diversity of the student body we would ideally like to attract.”

In a statement to *Campus Reform*, however, Stevenson clarified that biased textbooks are “not the only reason” for the dearth of women in Economics.

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As *Campus Reform* has **reported**, Rutgers University Professor Lee Jussim argues that the gender gap in STEM is more likely explained by women’s personal preferences as opposed to sexism.

“There’s a knee-jerk assumption that gaps—demographic gaps—reflect discrimination,” Jussim observed, but he contends these gaps aren’t exactly indicative of discrimination.

“There are many papers claiming to find evidence for discrimination [in STEM fields], but when you look at the data, there’s no evidence for it,” Jussim explained, adding that “advocacy of a political agenda can distort the science.”

Jussim does not deny the existence of discrimination in hiring and in the workforce, but contends that the gender disparity in STEM is a lot more likely due to “enduring gender differences between men and women.”

Women are more likely to desire to go into different fields than men do, and that shouldn’t be a problem, Jussim told *Campus Reform*.

“People should choose the [career] fields they want to be in,” he said. “Everything does not have to be perfectly equal all the time.”

**According to *Inside Higher Ed***, Stevenson and Zlotnick presented their paper, a copy of which was provided to *Campus Reform*, earlier this month at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association.

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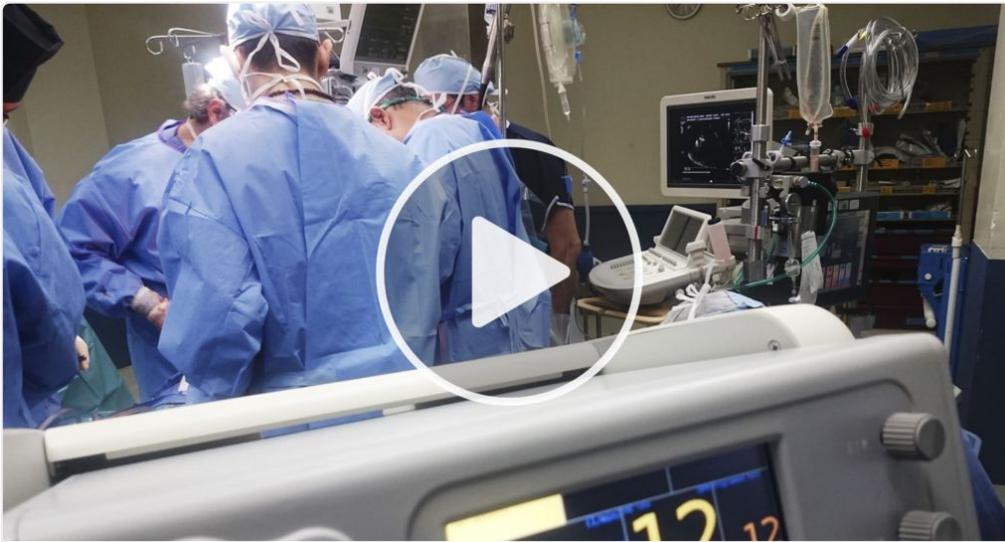
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Toni Airaksinen is a New Jersey based Correspondent for Campus Reform, and her reporting focuses on campus First Amendment, Title IX, Equal Opportunity, and due process issues. Her stories have appeared numerous times on the front page of the Drudge Report, and has been profiled by numerous outlets including Fox News, The New York Post, PBS News, and the Washington Examiner. As the first person in her family to attend college, she's also given numerous radio and TV interviews on the "first gen" experience. Features can be found on NPR, WNYC, the German newspaper Süddeutschen Zeitung, and more.

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