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Gender Differences in Predispositions towards Economics

| Article | Published: 22 December 2009

| Volume 36, pages 33–57, (2010) [Cite this article](#)



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Notes

1. See [Jacobs \[1995\]](#) on the slowdown in gender integration after 1985.
2. For example, [Turner and Bowen \[1999\]](#) find that, among students with very high math SAT scores (above 750), the share of women majoring in economics is significantly lower than men.
3. Here “preferences” should be understood in the general sense of “reasons for behaving” [[Bowles 1998](#)], not as hard-coded orientations.
4. That people rely primarily on first-hand information about what different careers are like receives some empirical support from our survey: two-thirds

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into economics. At SDSU, the GPA required to declare a business major is 2.9, while it is 2.4 for economics.

7. Several of the self-assessment and attitudinal questions are modeled after those in the annual Survey of College Freshman of the Higher Education Research Institute of the University of Los Angeles. See [Higher Education Research Institute \[2005\]](#).
8. Note, however, that checks of self-reported SAT scores against administrative records show upward bias in self-reported data [[Maxwell and Lopus 1994](#)].
9. Note that missing values on the math SAT score primarily reflect non-response: of the 32.8 percent of students not reporting a math SAT score, 6.3

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13. See also [Jensen and Owen \[2001\]](#) on the importance of career interests in students' decisions.
14. Notable also were the sprinkling of answers like “Ferris Bueler's Day Off” (the film in which Ben Stein played an insufferably boring economics teacher) and “Alex P. Keaton” (Michael J. Fox's character in the 1980s sitcom “Family Ties,” in which he played a *Wall Street Journal*-carrying, Louis-Rukeyser-watching proponent of supply-side economics).
15. As can be seen from [Figure 3](#), there were modest yet significant gender differences in expectations, with women tending to rate jobs of economists, stockbrokers, lawyers, and engineers as even more about money, hard work, and high incomes than men — while rating the other jobs as somewhat more

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Appendices

Appendix A

[illustration](#)

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Survey questions

Background information

Year of studies: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Major/likely major: _____

Standardized test scores (report your best results):

SAT Math: _____ SAT Verbal: _____

ACT composite: _____

Self-rated abilities

Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age. We want the most accurate estimate of how you see yourself.

Response categories: Top 10 percent, above average, average, below average, lowest 10 percent

Competitiveness

Computer skills

Communication skills

Interest in helping the disadvantaged

Mathematical ability

Motivation for school work

Overall intelligence

Personal goals and values

Please rate the importance to you personally of each of the following. *Response*

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General interest in economics topics

Which of the following topics, if any, would you be interested in learning about during your undergraduate studies? {check all that apply}

Consumer behavior and the media
Globalization and international trade
Poverty and inequality in the US

Global poverty and inequality

Discrimination in wages and employment

Women and the work world
How global capital markets work
Race, ethnicity, and economic opportunity
Reform of US social security retirement program
What drives the stock market

Impressions of various professions

We are interested in your impressions of jobs in various fields. For the following list of professions (journalist, stock broker, high-school teacher, electrical engineer, economist, psychologist, and corporate lawyer), which do you think of as:

- ... having well-defined expectations about work hours, dress, and behavior on the job?
- ... fostering friendly, sociable relationships with co-workers?
- ... likely to lead to a high-income lifestyle?

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Bansak, C., Starr, M. Gender Differences in Predispositions towards Economics. *Eastern Econ J* **36**, 33–57

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