

## ***Barriers to entry***

The last in our series on the shortcomings of economics looks at the discipline's lack of diversity

SCIENCE is supposed to be the ultimate meritocracy. People might sneer at a thinker's background or training, but there can be no arguing with a powerful new idea which explains the world better than its rivals do. In reality, academia is cluttered with odd cultures and practices which serve as barriers to entry—and, at times, as cover for discrimination. In economics, men receive tenure at a rate 12 percentage points higher than women do, after controlling for family circumstances and publication records. Women who clear that hurdle are about half as likely as men to be named full professor within seven years. Just 4% of doctoral degrees in economics were awarded to African-Americans in 2011 (compared with about 8% across all academic fields). Something is broken within the market for economists, and the profession has moved only belatedly and partially to address it. A lack of inclusivity is not simply a problem in itself but a contributor to other troubles within the field.

Though women in economics have long been aware of the discipline's biases, a growing body of research is making the problem harder for men to ignore. When decisions are made about tenure, men are not penalised for having co-authored lots of papers, whereas women who co-author with men are, according to work by Heather Sarsons, of Harvard University. That suggests women's contributions to such papers are discounted; in other fields, like sociology, this is not the case. Research by Erin Hengel of the University of Liverpool has shown that papers by women are better-written, on average, than those by men, but spend longer in peer review, suggesting that women are held to a higher standard. That makes female researchers less productive

The climate within economics can be hostile as well. Economics Job Market Rumors, an anonymous website frequented by graduate students and used to discuss job openings and candidates, has long been notorious for threads that include derogatory or sexually inappropriate remarks. A recent newsletter of the American Economic Association (AEA) opens with an essay by Jennifer Bennett Shinall, of Vanderbilt University. On a flight home from the AEA's annual meeting, another attendee attempted to kiss her and suggested her career would be fine so long as she "made smart decisions". Ms Shinall says she considered keeping the incident to herself, because she did not yet have tenure and might need letters of reference from her attacker's colleagues. Such concerns surely stop other episodes of this sort from ever coming to light.

The profession's failings in this regard almost certainly influence the quality and focus of economic research. Putting women off careers in academic economics, and undermining the productivity of those who persist, means excluding good minds and good ideas. It also means excluding different viewpoints. Although individual women have all sorts of ideologies, surveys suggest that the views of men and women on some issues diverge, on average, in significant ways. Male economists are more likely to prefer market solutions to government interventions. Women are more likely to favour redistribution and environmental-protection rules. Were economics to include a broader array of views, its findings might well change, too.

Indeed, these biases may also inform views about bias. Women are far more likely than their male colleagues to say that gender gaps are rooted in inequities in the market. A survey of a random sample of members of the AEA, by Ann Mari May and Mary McGarvey of the University of Nebraska and Robert Whaples of Wake Forest University, found that hardly any men believed professional opportunities for economics faculty are tilted against women. Remarkably, about a third believe there is bias in favour of women. Many male economists seem to reckon the meritocracy is functioning perfectly well, with no problems to fix; men presumably dominate because of superior ability.

The lack of diversity within economics is not just a matter of women. Limited diversity of race and background at the top of the field can distort policy in worrying ways. For example, Narayana Kocherlakota, an economist and former president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, argued in 2014 that an absence of diversity at the Fed reduces the breadth of perspectives considered and undermines its effectiveness as a central bank. (Mr Kocherlakota was the first non-white person to be president of a regional Fed bank.)

Economists are taking some steps to address these problems. The AEA recently adopted a code of conduct obliging economists to carry on civil and respectful dialogue, and is working to set up its own forum for discussion of job openings and candidates. But there is far more to be done. Hiring committees should re-examine their recruitment and promotion practices. Economic journals could take a page out of sociology's book and list authors according to their contributions to papers, rather than alphabetically. Removing the barriers faced by underrepresented groups would not transform the profession overnight, but would inject a bracing gust of competition into the field's imperfect meritocracy.

Improperly identified

To generate lasting improvement, in its diversity and in other problem areas, economics could also do with a change in mindset. The profession has a strong sense of who an economist is and what one does; it is, as Axel Leijonhufvud once noted in an amusing paper, like a strange and insular tribe. This group identity is bolstered by the field's status and influence, which might be threatened by changes to its composition, ideas and methodologies. But as economists point out so persuasively in other contexts, to improve requires change. Economics, like the economy, cannot thrive without a little creative destruction.

Adapted from The Economist May 10th

**Ex. 1 Find the words or expressions in the text which mean the following:**

1. a fault or failure to meet a certain standard
2. government or the holding of power by people selected according to merit
3. a contemptuous or mocking smile, remark, or tone
4. guaranteed permanent employment, especially as a teacher or lecturer, after a probationary period
5. a problem or difficulty that must be overcome
6. later than should have been the case
7. unpleasant or harsh
8. to weaken or ruin by degrees
9. to split and move out in different directions from a single point
10. a regular and imposing grouping or arrangement

**Ex. 2 Match the expressions from the two columns into logical collocations:**

|    |           |                |
|----|-----------|----------------|
| 1. | lack      | with           |
| 2. | Cluttered | degrees        |
| 3. | doctoral  | of inclusivity |
| 4. | academic  | written        |
| 5. | lack      |                |
| 6. | body      | of diversity   |
| 7. | better-   | fields         |
| 8. | peer      | of research    |

|     |                           |        |
|-----|---------------------------|--------|
| 9.  | held to a higher standard | for    |
| 10. | notorious                 | review |

**Ex. 3 Provide English equivalents for these expressions.**

1. odchylone
2. merytokracja
3. przekręcić, zniekształcić, fałszować
4. szerokość, zakres, rozległość
5. rzeźki, orzeźwiający
6. poryw wiatru
7. sposób myślenia, nastawienie, stosunek, postawa mentalność
8. wyspiarski, wyspowy, zaściankowy
9. podnosić, podtrzymywać, wzmacniać

**Ex. 4 Spot the mistake in the sentences below. Not every sentence is wrong.**

1. It's been ages since I have made a snowman.
2. I haven't painted in watercolours since ages.
3. Joan has been owning her Jaguar for a month.
4. It's the first time I have came across the word conscientious.
5. I have walked a dog before I left home today morning.
6. I have been learning foreign languages since childhood.

| <b>Glossary</b>           |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| shortcomings              | niedoskonałości               |
| meritocracy               | merytokracja                  |
| sneer                     | szyderczy śmiech              |
| tenure                    | kadencja                      |
| hurdle                    | płotek, przeszkoda            |
| belatedly                 | poniewczasie                  |
| hostile                   | wrogie                        |
| undermining               | podważać                      |
| diverge                   | różnić się                    |
| array                     | wyбір, szereg                 |
| lack of diversity         | brak zróżnicowania            |
| cluttered with            | zaśmiecone                    |
| doctoral degrees          | tytuł doktora                 |
| academic fields           | dziedzina akademicka          |
| lack of inclusivity       | brak włączności               |
| body of research          | przedmiot badań               |
| better-written            | lepiej napisane               |
| peer review               | recenzja kolegów              |
| held to a higher standard | odpowiadać wyższym standardom |
| notorious for             | robić coś notorycznie         |

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| tilted against | odchylone   |
| meritocracy    | merytokracja  |
| distort        | przekręcić, zniekształcić, fałszować                          |
| breadth        | szerokość, zakres, rozległość                                 |
| bracing        | rzeński, orzeźwiający   |
| gust           | poryw wiatru  |
| mindset        | sposób myślenia, nastawienie, stosunek, postawa<br>mentalność |
| insular        | wyspiarski, wyspowy, zaściankowy                              |
| bolstered      | podnosić, podtrzymywać, wzmacniać                             |
|                |   |

| ex.<br>1 |              | ex.<br>2 |                           |
|----------|--------------|----------|---------------------------|
| 1        | Shortcomings | 1        | lack of diversity         |
| 2        | Meritocracy  | 2        | Cluttered with            |
| 3        | Sneer        | 3        | doctoral degrees          |
| 4        | Tenure       | 4        | academic fields           |
| 5        | Hurdle       | 5        | lack of inclusivity       |
| 6        | Belatedly    | 6        | body of research          |
| 7        | Hostile      | 7        | better-written            |
| 8        | Undermining  | 8        | peer review               |
| 9        | Diverge      | 9        | held to a higher standard |
| 10       | Array        | 10       | notorious for             |

| ex.<br>3 |                | ex.<br>4 |                   |
|----------|----------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1        | tilted against | 1        | since i made      |
| 2        | Meritocracy    | 2        | for ages          |
| 3        | Distort        | 3        | has owned         |
| 4        | Breadth        | 4        | have come         |
| 5        | Bracing        | 5        | had walked/walked |
| 6        | Gust           | 6        | ok                |
| 7        | Mindset        | 7        |                   |
| 8        | Insular        | 8        |                   |
| 9        | Bolstered      | 9        |                   |
| 10       |                | 10       |                   |