

Translated by Chat cpt:

They treatment towards me was rude and aggressive. They humiliated me and condemned me.

"When I addressed this issue in a supervisory board meeting in the spring of 2019, parts of the supervisory board sided with me and referred to the treat-

ment I was receiving as wrong. The term 'mobbing' even came up from within the supervisory board, and all of this was documented. In the course of the meeting, one member of the supervisory board used an example to illustrate that such treatment would never occur with a man.

In the months leading up to the reelection date, two additional, seemingly unnecessary supervisory board meetings were called on short notice, and their tone was even worse than all the previous ones. A regular supervisory board meeting, which was no longer necessary after four meetings in five months, could not be canceled. I am now convinced that these meetings and their course were meant to wear me down so that I would 'voluntarily' forego reelection.

Accusations by the mayor and the chairman of the supervisory board – almost entirely baseless, by the way – were not brought up internally but were escalated publicly and unexpectedly in the supervisory board, and even in the press. Press campaigns against me were not stopped, and sometimes, they were initiated by members of the supervisory board violating their confidentiality obligations to provide information with a false spin to the press.

Now, an American study finds that my experience in Soest is not the exception but the rule:"



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For Women in Economics, the Hostility Is Out in the Open
Studies have found that the field is plagued by a singular problem ...

By [Ben Casselman](#)

Feb. 23, 2021

A few years ago, the economists Alicia Sasser Modestino and Justin Wolfers sat at the back of a professional conference and watched Rebecca Diamond, a rising star in their field, present her latest research on inequality. Or at least she was meant to present it — moments after she began her talk, the audience began peppering her with questions.

"She must have gotten 15 questions in the first five minutes, including, 'Are you going to show us the data?'" Dr. Modestino recalled. It was an odd, even demeaning question — the session was in the data-heavy field of applied microeconomics. Of course she was going to show her data.

Later that morning, Dr. Modestino and Dr. Wolfers watched as another prominent economist, Arindrajit Dube, presented a paper on the minimum wage. But while that was one of the most hotly debated topics in the field, the audience allowed Dr. Dube to lay out his findings for several minutes with few interruptions.

Over a drink later, Dr. Modestino and Dr. Wolfers wondered: Had the audiences treated the two presenters differently because of their genders?

They couldn't be sure. Maybe the audience treated Dr. Dube differently because he was more senior. Maybe they had simply found his paper more convincing, or less interesting. Maybe the observations of Dr. Modestino and

Dr. Wolfers were a result of their own biases — Dr. Dube, in an email, recalled getting lots of questions, some of them quite skeptical. (He added that he didn't know how his reception compared with Dr. Diamond's, and he said didn't challenge Dr. Modestino's recollection over all.)

So Dr. Modestino and Dr. Wolfers, who has written on economics in *The New York Times*, did what economists often do: They gathered data. Along with two other economists, Pascale Dupas and Muriel Niederle, they recruited dozens of graduate students across the country to attend hundreds of economics presentations to record what happened. Their findings, according to [a working paper](#) that is expected to be published next week by the National Bureau of Economic Research: Women received 12 percent more questions than men, and they were more likely to get questions that were patronizing or hostile.

"It measures something that we thought couldn't be measured," Dr. Modestino said. "It links it to a potential reason that women are underrepresented in the profession."

(Another sign of trouble in the profession: Dr. Modestino and her colleagues listed their graduate student contributors as co-authors on their paper, but many declined to have their names published out of fear of retaliation.)

The paper is the latest addition to a mounting body of evidence of [gender discrimination in economics](#). Other researchers in recent years have found that women are less likely than men to be hired and promoted, and face greater barriers to getting their work published in economic journals. Those problems aren't unique to economics, but there is evidence that the field has a particular problem: [Gender and racial gaps in economics](#) are wider, and have narrowed less over time, than in many other fields.

In response to those concerns, the American Economic Association commissioned a survey of more than 9,000 current and former members that asked about their experiences in the

field. The results, released in 2019, revealed a disturbing number of cases of [harassment and outright sexual assault](#). And it found that subtler forms of bias were rampant: Only one woman in five reported being "satisfied with the overall climate" in the field. Nearly one in three said they believed they had been discriminated against. And nearly half of women said they had avoided speaking at a conference or seminar because they feared harassment or disrespectful treatment.

"Half of women are saying they don't even want to present in a seminar," Dr. Modestino said. "We're losing a lot of ideas that way."

The harsh reception faced by women is particularly striking because they are also less likely to be invited to present their research in the first place. Women accounted for fewer than a quarter of the economic talks given over recent years, according to another [paper](#). Racial minorities were even more underrepresented: Barely 1 percent of the speakers were Black or Hispanic.

"It's just embarrassingly bad," said Jennifer Doleac, an economist at Texas A&M University who is one of that study's authors. Only about 30 talks have been delivered by Black or Latina women since the authors began tracking the data, she noted. "These scholars are just not being invited, ever."

The lack of representation is so significant that Dr. Modestino and her colleagues could not study whether Black and Latino economists were treated differently in seminars than their white counterparts — there were too few examples in their data to analyze.

The lack of opportunities has potentially significant career consequences. Research presentations, known as seminars, are an important way that academics, particularly those early in their careers, disseminate their research, build their reputations and get feedback on their work.

Seminars play a particular role in economics. In other fields, they tend to be collegial affairs, with mostly respectful questions and few

interruptions. In economics, however, they often resemble gladiatorial battles, with audience members vying to poke holes in the presenter's argument. Seemingly every economist, regardless of gender, has at least one horror story of losing control of a presentation. Many say they have been brought to tears.

Most economists acknowledge that there are bad actors who are more interested in scoring debating points than raising legitimate questions. But many defend the field's culture of aggressiveness, saying it is helpful to get feedback — even critical feedback — from colleagues.

"I expect a room full of economists to speak up and have their own opinions and ideas," said I-oana Marinescu, a University of Pennsylvania economist. "To me, if they're not asking questions, they might be a little bit zoned out."

Dr. Marinescu recalled a talk she gave at a prestigious conference several years ago, where she, too, faced frequent interruptions. It was terrifying, she said — but also stimulating.

"The questions were incessant, but they were awesome questions from the top people in the profession," she said. "From my perspective, it was one of the best experiences I ever had."

Still, Dr. Marinescu said, reforms are needed. And in recent years, some economists have begun to question the field's culture of

aggressiveness, arguing that it discourages people from entering the field. Several universities have instituted rules meant to cut down on bad behavior, such as banning questions for the first 10 or 15 minutes of a talk so that speakers can get through at least the beginning of their presentations uninterrupted.

But Judith Chevalier, a Yale economist who chairs the American Economic Association's Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession, said rules intended to improve seminars wouldn't address the underlying problems that Dr. Modestino's research revealed.

"Seminars are a public setting — seminars are when they are on their good behavior," Dr. Chevalier said. "We can't declare victory even if we fix seminars. We need to re-examine everything. Are we biased when we hire? Are we biased when we mentor? Are we biased in seminars? Are we biased when we promote?"

Ben Casselman writes about economics, with a particular focus on stories involving data. He previously reported for FiveThirtyEight and The Wall Street Journal. More about Ben Casselman

A version of this article appears in print on Feb. 26, 2021, Section B, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Doubts Feed Economics Gender Gap. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)

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