

How Diverse Is Your Reading List? An Analysis Of BSc Economics Curriculum

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Introduction

- Gender and ethnicity imbalance in Economics discipline has been a long-standing issue:
 - An AEA survey shows that among tenured and tenure-track faculty in economics, only 23.5% are women and only 6.3% are black or Hispanic (Bayer & Rouse, 2016).
 - A RES study shows that in the UK women only represented 26% academic economists in 2018/19, and around 8 percent of standard academic posts in economics were held by Black and minority ethnic women in 2018 (Bateman et al, 2021).
 - The recent RES report shows that out of all UK Economics undergraduate students in 2020/21, only 32% are female and white students account for 58.9% (Paredes Fuentes et al, 2023).
- The content of university knowledge remains dominated by the West for the West (Bhambra, et al. 2018).

Introduction

- In this study, we present micro-level evidence on diversity within Economics by looking into the BSc economic curriculum in a top UK university.
 - Analyze data on gender, ethnicity, and geographic location of the authors in the essential reading lists for all BSc economics modules including both compulsory and optional ones.
 - Examine their relationship with the characteristics (gender, ethnicity) of module leaders who assign the readings.
- Similar studies are done in other disciplines, for example, political science (Arshad et al, 2021).

Introduction

- Main findings
 - The evidence suggests that the essential reading lists are dominated by white male authors based in North America or Europe.
 - Modules with female lecturers or mixed (both male and female) lecturers tend to assign more readings by female authors compared to modules with male lecturers.
 - Modules with non-white lecturers tend to assign more readings by non-white authors compared to modules with white lecturers.

Introduction

- Start with a first-year compulsory module:
 - We diversify the reading list to have a more diverse set of authors, topics, examples and applications.
 - We re-design the module research project, as part of summative assessment, to have more diverse perspectives reflected.
- Reflect on the supply of female and minority economists and offer some thoughts on how to address the diversity issue in both short and long terms.

Data

- BSc economic curriculum (a 3-year programme) in a top UK university in 2021/22.
 - Compulsory modules (Years 1 and 2 mandatory ones)
 - Year 1: Economics (intro level), Statistics, Mathematics, Applied Econ (intro econometrics).
 - Year 2: Microeconomics (intermediate level), Macroeconomics (intermediate level), Econometrics (intermediate level).
 - Optional modules: all other 35 modules open for selection in Years 1,2 & 3.
- Reading lists for all modules (both compulsory and optional ones), obtained from both University library and module syllabi.

Methodology

- **Coding**
 - Characteristics of authors of the readings (focus on essential readings)
 - Gender: male and female
 - Ethnicity: white, non-white and not clear
 - Geographic location (obtained at the time of publication): Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, South America, others
 - Characteristics of the module leaders who assigned the readings
 - Gender: male and female
 - Ethnicity: white, non-white and not clear

Methodology

- **Analysis**

- Descriptive statistics of characteristics (gender, ethnicity and geographic Location) of the authors in the reading lists.
- Relationship between the characteristics of authors and characteristics of module leaders.
- Analysis by nature of modules, compulsory vs optional ones, as well as aggregate level.

RESULTS I:

Characteristics (Gender, Ethnicity
and Geographic Location) of the
Authors

Gender of the authorship

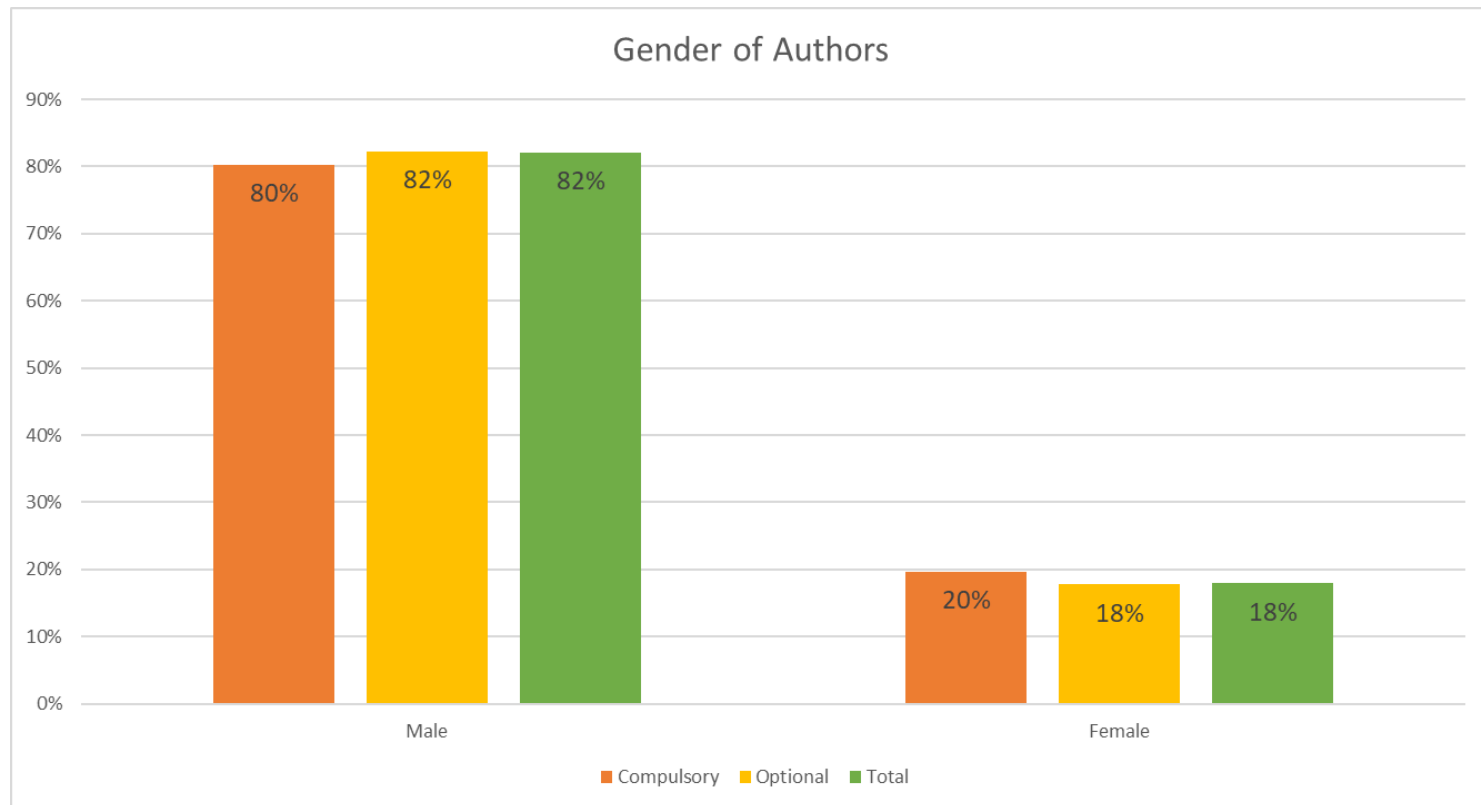
Statistics regarding the gender of the authorship for compulsory and optional modules across all three years.

	Gender					
	Compulsory		Optional		Total	
Male	53	80.30%	556	82.25%	609	82.08%
Female	13	19.70%	120	17.75%	133	17.92%
Total Authors	66	100.00%	676	100.00%	742	100.00%
# of Readings	20		506		526	

Male-to-Female Ratio

- Compulsory: 4.08
- Optional: 4.63
- Total: 4.58

Gender of the authorship

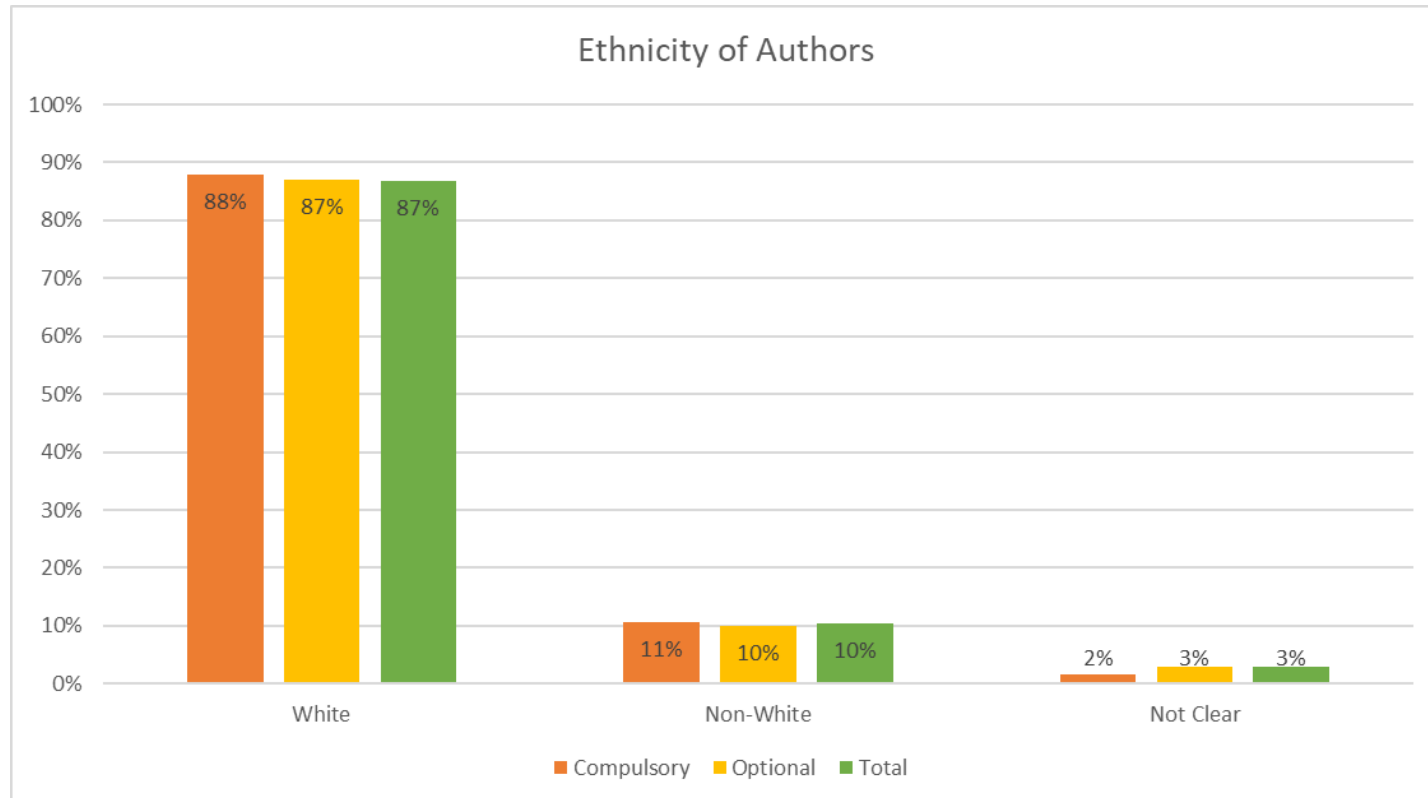


Ethnicity of the authorship

Statistics regarding the ethnicity of the authorship for compulsory and optional modules across all three years.

Ethnicity						
	Compulsory		Optional		Total	
White	58	87.88%	586	86.69%	644	86.79%
Non-White	7	10.61%	70	10.36%	77	10.38%
Not Clear	1	1.52%	20	2.96%	21	2.83%
Total Authors	66	100.00%	676	100.00%	742	100.00%
# of Readings	20		506		526	

Ethnicity of the authorship



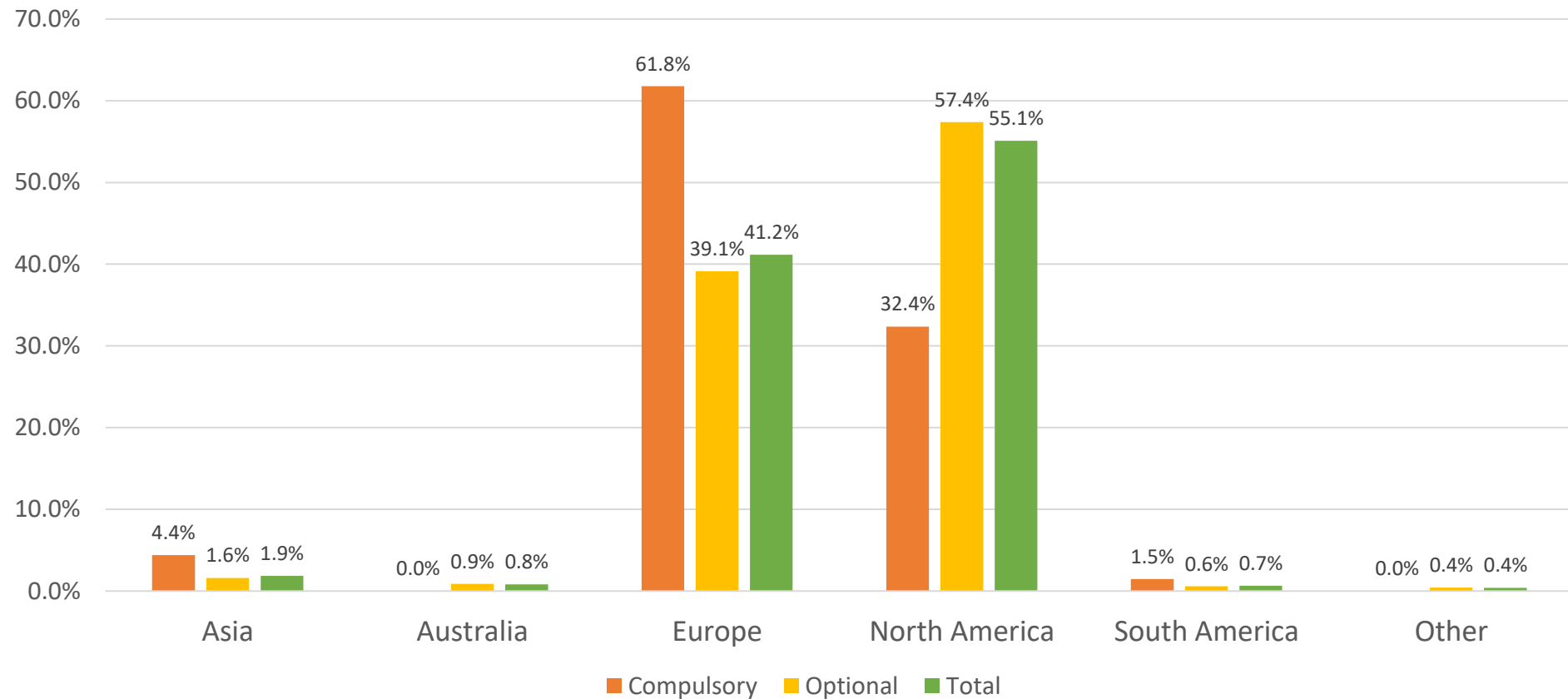
Geographic location of the authorship

Statistics regarding the geographic location of the authorship, obtained through their affiliationn at the time of publication, for compulsory and optional modules across all 3 years.

Geographic Location						
	Compulsory		Optional		Total	
Asia	3	4.41%	11	1.61%	14	1.86%
Australia	0	0.00%	6	0.88%	6	0.80%
Europe	42	61.76%	268	39.12%	310	41.17%
North America	22	32.35%	393	57.37%	415	55.11%
South America	1	1.47%	4	0.58%	5	0.66%
Other	0	0.00%	3	0.44%	3	0.40%
Total Affiliations	68	100.00%	685	100.00%	753	100.00%
# of Readings	20		506		526	

Geographic location of the authorship

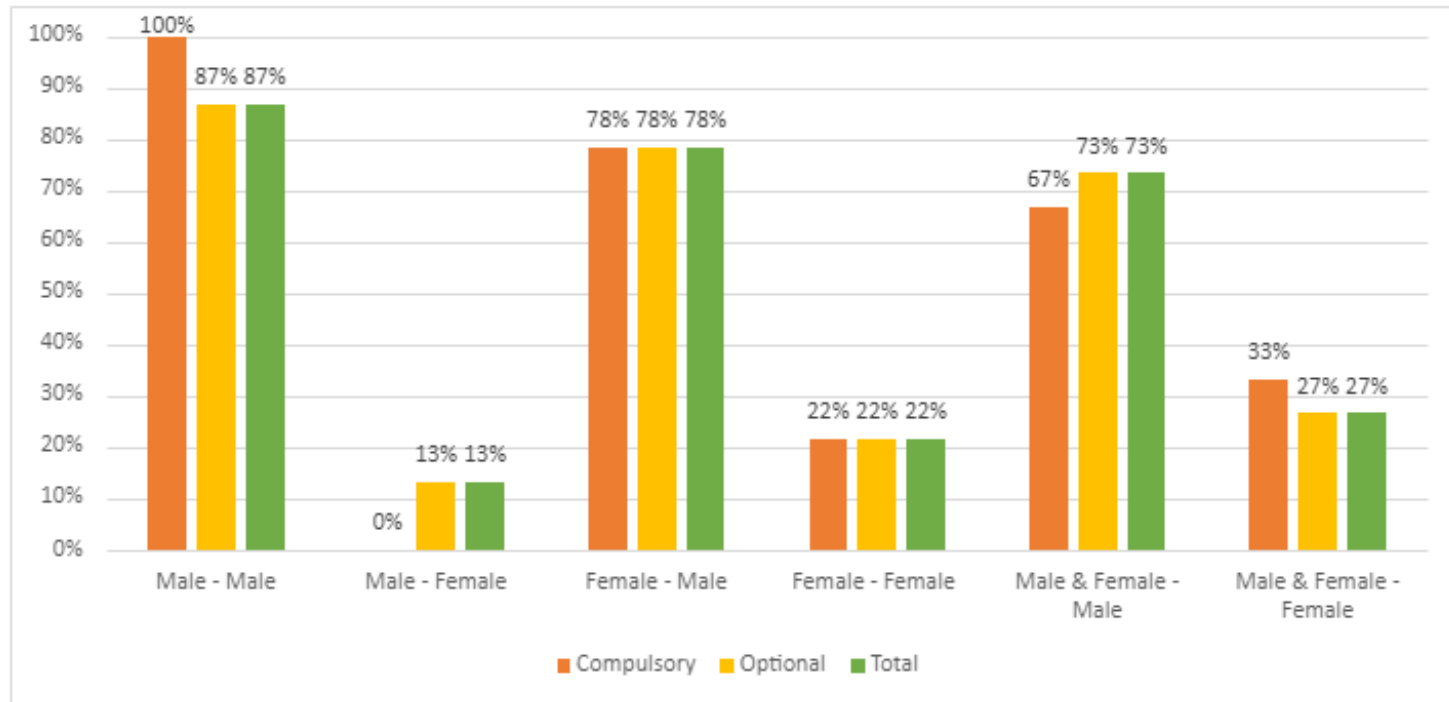
Geographic Location of Authors



RESULTS II

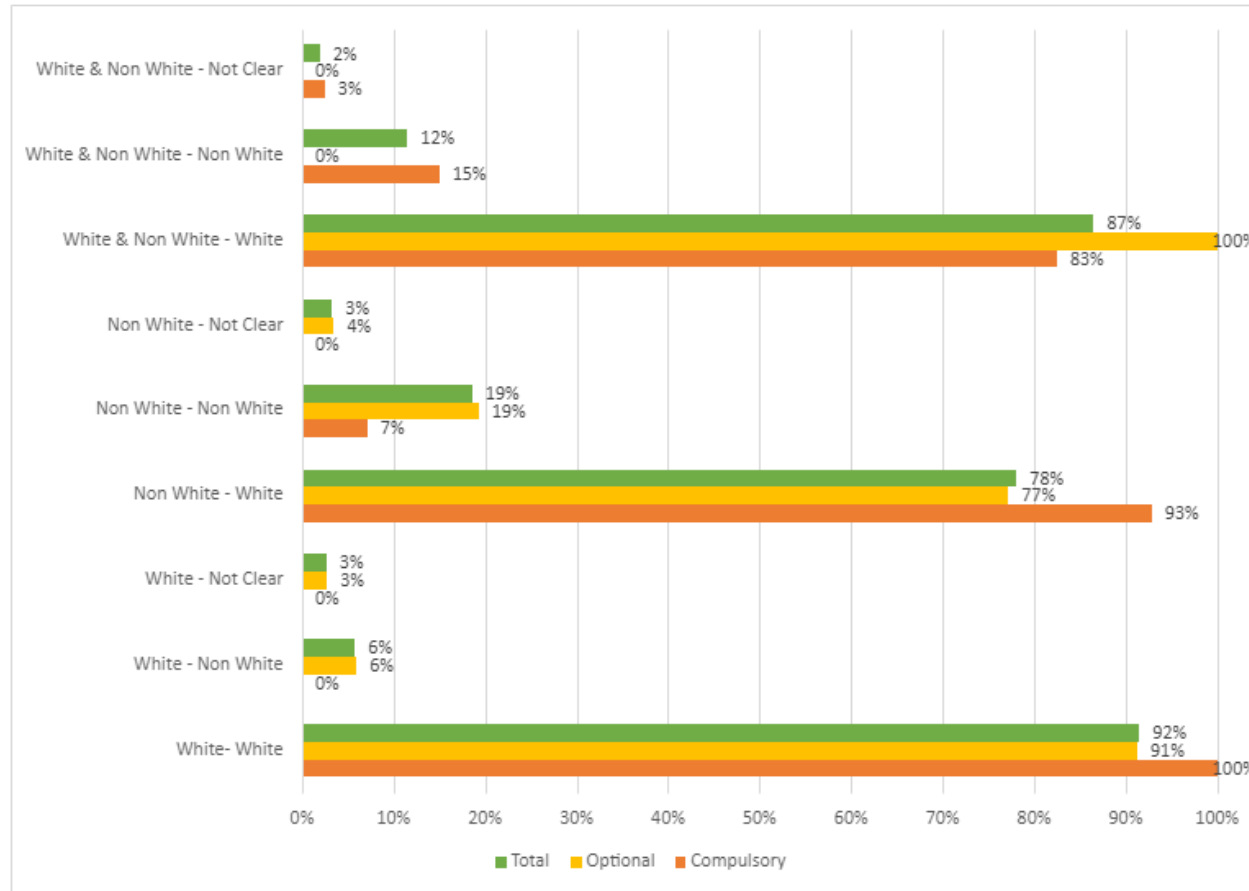
Relationship between the
characteristics of authors and
characteristics of module leaders

Relationship between gender of module leaders and gender of authors



Note: (Male - Female) means Male Module Leaders & Female Authors

Relationship between ethnicity of module leaders and ethnicity of authors



Note: (White - Non White) means White Module Leaders & Non White Authors

Diversify a first-year module: an example

(to be effective from 2023/24)

- Start with a first-year compulsory module “Applied Economics”. It covers intro econometrics in the first half term, and focuses on the applications to various economics topics such as consumer demand, consumption and saving, employment and minimum wage and labour supply in the second half term.
- Actions taken:
 - Summarize the biographies and contributions of top Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and/or female economists.
 - Identify a list of videos by diverse economists on their research.
 - Diversify the reading list to have a more diverse set of authors, topics, examples and applications.
 - Redesign the module research project to have more diverse perspectives reflected.

Diversify a first-year module: an example

- Summarize the biographies and contributions of top BAME and/or female economists at <https://ideas.repec.org/top/female economists.all.html>

Overview of Top BAME or Female Economists

William Nguyen UCL Department of Economics

Part of "Enhancing the Inclusivity of BSc Economics Curriculum" project (Project leads: Dr Duani Lu and Prof Aureo de Paula), sponsored by the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences (SHS) Dean's Fund.



Name: Carmen M. Reinhart
Institution: Harvard University

Biographies: Carmen Reinhart (born in 1965) is a Cuban-American economist who is the Maria S. Zischausk Professor of the International Financial System at Harvard Kennedy School and Chief Economist at the World Bank. In the past, she was part of the advisory panel for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. She has served as Senior Policy Advisor and Deputy Director at the International Monetary Fund and Chief Economist for Bear Stearns. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University.

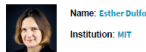
Academic Contributions: Carmen Reinhart's areas of expertise include macroeconomics and international finance. Her research focuses on globalization and financial crises. Specifically, she works with capital flows, exchange rate policies, and banking and sovereign debt crises. In her book *This Time It's Different* explores the similarities and patterns between financial crises, both in emerging and developed economies, throughout history. She has also researched the relationship between banking and currency crises in the paper *The Twin Crises: The Causes and Balance-of-Payments Problems*, concluding that banking crises typically precede currency crises.



Name: Asli Demirgüç-Kunt
Institution: World Bank

Biographies: Asli Demirgüç-Kunt (born in 1961) is a Turkish economist who is serving as the Chief Economist of the Europe and Central Asia Region of the World Bank. She has previously also served as Director of Research Policy and Chief Economist of the Finance and Private Sector Operations Department at the World Bank. Prior to joining the World Bank, she worked at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and Western Economic Association. She received her Ph.D. from Ohio State University.

Academic Contributions: Asli Demirgüç-Kunt's research interest focuses mainly on finance and banking. Her research projects include the relationship between financial structure, firm performance, and economic development. She has created the Global Financial Inclusion (FinIndex) database which is the leading source of data on global access to financial services. One key insight from the database is how Covid-19 boosted the adoption of digital financial services, particularly in developing countries. She also created the Global Financial Development Report aimed to improve financial stability and to analyse the relationship between access to financial services and a country's development.



Name: Esther Duflo
Institution: MIT

Biographies: Esther Duflo (born in 1972) is a French-American economist. She is the Abdul Latif Jameel Professor of Poverty Alleviation and Development Economics at MIT. She is also the co-founder of Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), which aims to reduce poverty through conducting experiments and research and advising policymakers across the world. She has also worked in Paris graduated from the Ecole Normale Supérieure before receiving her Ph.D. from MIT in 1999.

Academic Contributions: Esther Duflo's fields of interest include development economics, microeconomics, and poverty. She won the 2016 Nobel Prize in Economic along with Abhijit Banerjee and Michael Kremer for their experimental approach to alleviate poverty. Their research has helped change the assumptions about how the poor make economic decisions. She co-authored the book "Poor Economics" which shines light on how the poor make their decisions regarding education, healthcare and savings. The book won the Financial Times Business Book of the Year in 2011.



Name: Serena Ng
Institution: Columbia University

Biographies: Serena Ng (born in 1969) is a Chinese-American economist. She is the Edwin W. Rickert Professor of Economics at Columbia University. Previously, she was a professor at the University of Michigan, and John Hopkins University. She has also worked for the Bank of Canada as head of the research department as well as for the National Bureau of Economic Research. She received her Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1993 for her thesis on time series and econometrics.

Academic Contributions: Serena Ng's areas of interest include Econometrics, Empirical Macroeconomics, Time Series and Big Data. Her research focuses mainly on time series and econometrics as shown by her most cited publications, which include work on LAD length selection, unit root tests and approximate factor models. She has also worked with machine learning to remove seasonal and cyclical variations from retail sales data using weekly consumer data. Lately, in her paper "Modeling Macroeconomic Variations after Covid-19", she has worked with modelling the impact of Covid-19 shock on various macroeconomic factors.

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Name: Raghuram G. Rajan
Institution: University of Chicago

Biographies: Raghuram Rajan (born in 1963) is an Indian economist who is the Katherine Duhan Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at Chicago Booth. He served as the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (2013-2016) and as Chief Economist and Director of Research at the International Monetary Fund (2008-2010). He also served as the International Advisor for the Indian Government and was the President of the American Finance Association. He received his Ph.D. from MIT in 1985 with his thesis on banking.

Academic Contributions: Raghuram Rajan's field of interest include corporate finance, theory of organizations and financial institutions. His research focuses on banking, finance, and its role in economic development. His paper "Financial Dependence and Growth" has contributed to our understanding of the relationship between the development of a country's financial sector and its growth rate. He has also contributed to the field of credit in his paper "The Benefits of Lending Relationships", through analyzing how lending relationships benefit small businesses. Rajan has won numerous prizes including the Fisher Black Prize for the best finance researcher under the age of 40.



Name: Hyun-Song Shin
Institution: Bank for International Settlements

Biographies: Hyun-Song Shin (born in 1959) is a South-Korean economist who is serving as Economic Adviser and Head of Research in the Monetary and Economic Department at the Bank for International Settlements (BIS). Prior to joining the BIS, he was professor of economics at Princeton University and professor of finance at the London School of Economics. He has also served as Senior Advisor to the Korean president in 2010. He graduated from Oxford University where he received his doctorate degree.

Academic Contributions: Hyun-Song Shin's research interest include finance and monetary economics. He specializes in banking, international finance and monetary economics. He has written many papers on the topics of leverage and liquidity for banks such as his book "Risk and Liquidity". He has also contributed to the field of currency crises through his paper "Unique Equilibrium in a Model of Self-Fulfilling Currency Attacks", which concluded that there exists a unique equilibrium when financial variables are considered which diverges from models of complete information at the time. Currently, his research for the BIS focuses on the digital innovations within the financial sector such as cryptocurrencies.



Name: Afif Rehman Mian
Institution: Princeton University

Biographies: Afif Mian (born in 1979) is a Pakistani-American economist. He is the John H. Laporte, Jr. Class of 1987 Professor of Economics at Princeton University. Previously, he worked as a professor at the University of California, Berkeley and at the University of Chicago. He has also co-founded the Center for Economic Research in California (CER) in 2007, which aims to improve economic research and teaching. He obtained his bachelor's in Mathematics with Computer Science and Ph.D. in Economics both from MIT.

Academic Contributions: Afif Mian's areas of interest include macroeconomics, housing debt, and finance. His research focuses mainly on the relationship between finance and macroeconomics. His book "House of Debt" has contributed to our understanding of the cause of the Great Recession. It argues that the failure of banks is an inadequate explanation for the Great Recession but rather the main cause is the rise of household debt due to excessive mortgage lending. Currently, his research focuses on the implications of rising inequality for macroeconomy. His paper "Inherited Inequality" theorizes that large debt burdens lowers aggregate demand.



Name: Raj Chetty
Institution: Harvard University

Biographies: Raj Chetty (born in 1978) is an Indian-American economist. He is William A. Jackson Professor of Public Economics at Harvard University. He is also the director of Opportunity Insights, a non-partisan that uses big data to allow children from disadvantaged background better chances to succeed. He has previously taught at University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2005 and is one of its youngest tenured professors.

Academic Contributions: Raj Chetty's areas of interest include Public Economics, Behavioural Economics and Labour Economics. His research focuses on education, economic mobility, and tax policies. His paper "Where is the Land of Opportunity?" has contributed to the understanding of intergenerational mobility, especially in the U.S. Chetty's research has also helped design government policies through combining empirical evidence and economic theory. His paper "Dividend and Taxation" also contributed to the effect that non-salient taxation has on consumer demand using a field experiment in a grocery store.

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Name: Aviral Kumar Triwai
Institution: Rajagiri Business School

Biographies: Aviral Kumar Triwai is an Assistant Professor at Rajgiri Business School (RBS), India. Prior to joining RBS, he served as Associate Professor at Manipal Business School, France, and as an Assistant Professor at IIS Hyderabad, India. After graduating with a degree in Economics from Lucknow University, Lucknow, India, he received his M.Phil (in Labour Economics) and Ph.D. (in Energy and Environment) from IISL University, Tugue.

Academic Contributions: Aviral Kumar Triwai's research interests focus on various issues concerning energy, environment, tourism, macroeconomy and growth & development. He has published in various journals of international repute including top ranked journals in the prestigious Financial Times list. His previous researches have featured in journals such as *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *International Review of Financial Analysis*, *Economic Modelling* and many others. He has also co-edited his *Best Researcher Award 2016* by ORSS (Economic) Chartered Trade, Chennai and prestigious *Prof. B. J. Ramdas Best Award for 2024* from The Indian Economic Society for his outstanding academic contribution.



Name: Ravi Jagannathan
Institution: Northwestern University

Biographies: Ravi Jagannathan is a chair professor of the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. He received a Ph.D. in Financial Economics (1989) from University of Illinois, an M.S. in Financial Economics (1984) from Carnegie Mellon University, an B.S. from the Indian Institute of Management at Amalambad (1979), and a B.E. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Madras (1975). His Ph.D. dissertation received the Dissertation Honors award for excellence in economics.

Academic Contributions: Ravi Jagannathan's research interests include asset pricing, capital markets, portfolio performance appraisal, and financial institutions. His articles have appeared in leading academic journals, including the *Journal of Applied Econometrics*, *Journal of Financial Economics*, *Journal of Finance*, and *Review of Financial Studies* and in several graduate level textbooks. He is recognized internationally for his research on asset valuation. He has received the *Best Paper Award* from the American Finance Association, and the top performing large covariance matrix received the 2014 Graham H. Dodd for Value Investing.



Name: Danny Quah
Institution: National University of Singapore

Biographies: Danny Quah was born in Penang, in the Federation of Malaya which later became Malaysia. Quah obtained his B.A. from Princeton University and his Ph.D. from Harvard University. Quah was previously Assistant Professor of Economics at MIT, and then at LSE (London School of Economics and International Development) and the School of the Saw Swee Hooh, Southeast Asia Centre. He served as LSE Vice-Chancellor for Economics, and Council Member on Malaysia's National Economic Advisory Council.

Academic Contributions: Danny Quah's research interests lie in income inequality, economic growth, and international economic relations. Quah's work takes a long-run perspective on world growth and on global power shift and the rise of the east, and alternative models of global power relations. Quah is Commissioner on the Space-Strategic Commission on Global Economics, Transformation, and serves on the Executive Committee, International Economic Association and the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council for Geopolitics. He is Vice-Chair of Singapore's Advisory Commission on Platform Workers.



Name: Gita Ghosh
Institution: MIT

Biographies: Gita Ghosh is an American economist who has served as the Director of the MIT Center for Global Development and joined the IMF, co-founding the IMF's Center for Global Development and the IMF's Assistant Professor at the Vassar Institute for International Studies.

Academic Contributions: Gita Ghosh's research interests include the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the financial system, COVID-19 pandemic that led to global recession, and the Tax Force made up of the leaders WTO, and G20 in India and the establishment of a working group to identify trade barriers, apply to identify ways to lower- and to 2022. Financial Times named Gita one of the world's most influential women of the year.

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Name: Caroline Minter Hoxby
Institution: Stanford University

Biographies: Caroline Hoxby (born in 1965) is the Scott and Barbara Hoxby Professor of Economics at Stanford University. She was Senior Policy Advisor and Deputy Director at the International Monetary Fund and Chief Economist at the Investment Bank Bear Stearns in the 1990s. She serves in the Advisory Panel of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and was a member of the Congressional Budget Office from 2001 to 2007.

Academic Contributions: Trained as a public finance and labor economist, Caroline Hoxby is one of the world's leading scholars on the Economics of Education. Her research focuses on higher education policy, with an emphasis on using data to address policy challenges including meritocracy, the timing of education, and the impact of economic conditions on educational attainment. Her work often uses unique datasets of university students, including the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), to examine the relationship between education, health, and income. In addition, she is an expert proponent of the use of scientific methods (when feasible) in education research.



Name: Carmen Reinhart
Institution: Harvard University

Biographies: Carmen Reinhart is the Maria S. Zischausk Professor of the International Financial System at Harvard Kennedy School. She was Senior Policy Advisor and Deputy Director at the International Monetary Fund and Chief Economist at the Investment Bank Bear Stearns in the 1990s. She serves in the Advisory Panel of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and was a member of the Congressional Budget Office from 2001 to 2007.

Academic Contributions: Carmen Reinhart's areas of expertise are in international finance, and macroeconomics. Her work has helped to inform the understanding of financial crises in both advanced economies and emerging markets. During her career, Reinhart has worked in numerous roles to address policy challenges including meritocracy, the timing of education, and the impact of economic conditions on educational attainment. Her work often uses unique datasets of university students, including the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), to examine the relationship between education, health, and income. In addition, she is an expert proponent of the use of scientific methods (when feasible) in education research.



Name: Antoinette Schoar
Institution: MIT Sloan School of Management

Biographies: Antoinette Schoar is a German-American economist currently the Oberson C. Mergenthaler Family Professor of Finance and Entrepreneurship at the MIT Sloan School of Management. She has received her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Chicago in 2000. Aside from her academic career, she has worked in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Schoar is also a founder of *Impacta*, a non-profit that uses research to drive behavior economics and psychology in order to solve various social problems.

Academic Contributions: Antoinette Schoar's current research focuses on the areas of consumer finance, entrepreneurial finance, and new financial technologies. Some of her ongoing projects investigate how competition in credit card markets impacts consumers, the role of mortgage markets in the economy, applications of behavioral economics to consumer finance and cryptocurrency trading. She has received several awards including the Lufftman Prize for Distinguished Research in Entrepreneurship and the Little Prize for best article in the *Journal of Finance*. She is the co-author of the NBER Corporate Finance Group.



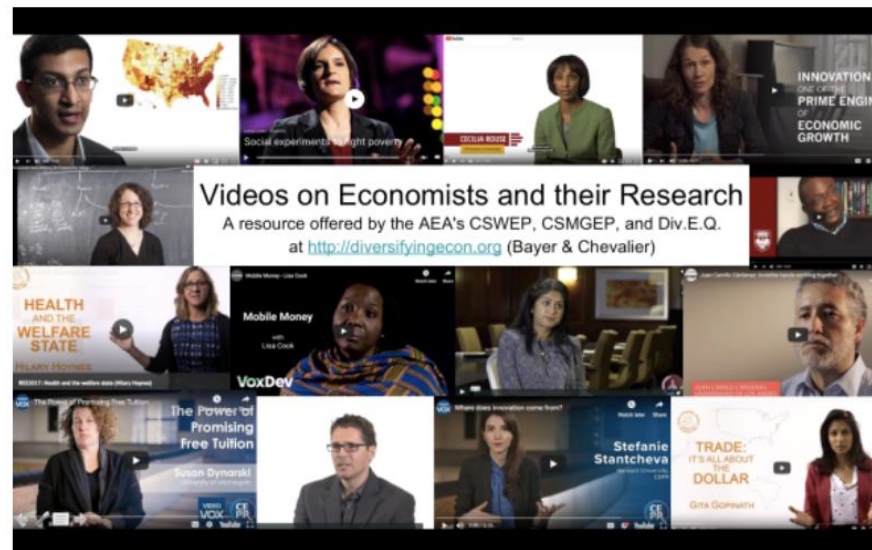
Name: Janet Currie
Institution: Princeton University

Biographies: Janet Currie is the Henry Putnam Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Princeton University and the Co-Director of Princeton Center for Health and Wellbeing. She also co-directs the Program on Families and Children at the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Academic Contributions: Janet Currie's current research interests include child care, income inequality, and access to health care, environmental threats to health, the impact of health care on income, and the long-run impact of health problems in pregnancy and early childhood. Currie was named one of the Top 100 in Economics by the *Journal of Economic* Forum in July 2015. She has served as the President of the American Society of Health Economics, the Society for Labor Economics, and the European Economic Association, and as the Vice President of the American Economic Association. She has served on the Board of Reviewing Editors of Science, as the Editor of the *Journal of Economic Literature*, and on the editorial boards of many other journals.

Diversify a first-year module: an example

- Identify a list of videos by diverse economists on their research and integrate the relevant videos to the module, for example:
 - Women in Economics Series: <https://learn.mru.org/women-economics-series/>.
 - Videos on economists and their research at <https://diversifyingecon.org/videos-on-economists/>



Diversify a first-year module: an example

- Diversify the reading list to have a more diverse set of authors, topics, examples and applications. For example:
 - On the topic of employment and minimum wages, in addition to Card and Krueger (AER, 1994), we add research in less developed countries/regions such as China, Thailand, Indonesia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and have discussion on the minimum wage puzzle in less developed countries to reconcile theory and evidence.
 - On the topic of labour supply, we add more readings on Female labour supply, e.g. Goldin, C. (AER, 2006) with video at <https://learn.mru.org/women-economics-series-claudia-goldin/>, and discussion in various countries such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

- Re-design the module research project, as part of summative assessment, to have more diverse perspectives reflected.
 - *Before:* ask students to study an economic question in a given country with a given dataset, e.g. “How effective are the measures implemented by the UK government to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic?”
 - *After:* ask students to study an economic question in a country of their choice with suggested datasets, e.g. research the impact of Covid-19 on labour supply in a country of their choice and their subsequent policies.

Discussion

- Move forward
 - Diversify the reading lists to have a diverse set of authors, topics, examples and applications for more modules.
 - Enhance the exposure of students to the work by female/ethnic minority economists (*“Role Model”* effect)
 - More female/ethnic minority professors teach UG modules.
 - Interviews with more female/ethnic minority professors.
 - Foster the learning environment for relevance, belonging, and growth mindsets.
 - Bayer et al. (2020) find that women and underrepresented minority students experience lower measures of relevance, belonging, and growth mindsets in introductory economic courses compared to men and non-underrepresented students.

Discussion

- Move forward
 - In the longer term, increase the supply of female/ethnic minority economists.
 - Economics pipeline in undergraduates: Access, Continuation, and Degree outcomes (Paredes Fuentes et al, 2023)
 - Support those students so inclined to pursue their further study and academic careers. Some good practices includes the [Economics PhD Applicant Mentoring Programme \(AMP\)](#) which helps applicants from underrepresented backgrounds prepare their applications to economics PhD programmes by matching applicants to mentors who are PhD students in the top Economics departments, including UCL Economics.
 - Mentoring, retention and promotion of female and ethnic minority economists.

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Thank You!

Questions/Comments:
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