



TUESDAY
September 29, 2020
09:00 – 10:00

KEYNOTE LECTURE II
(Language: English)

VIRTUAL

Keynote Lecture of

Muriel Niederle (Stanford University)

“A gender agenda: Trickle-down effects of affirmative action“

Gender differences in education and labor market outcomes remain ubiquitous. Compared to standard economic explanations, the role of psychological attributes and their gender differences has only recently gained prominence.

In this talk I review a specific behavioral trait: competitiveness. I first quickly provide a design for measuring this trait and show that women are less likely to enter competitions than men. After confirming the robustness of this finding, I turn toward establishing the importance of competitiveness outside of experimental settings. I show that competitiveness predicts education choices as well as income in a representative sample, and accounts for a portion of gender differences in these outcomes. We also confirm that competitiveness is a trait that is similarly or more important than famous psychological traits such as the big five.

Establishing external or economic relevance, that is that competitiveness predicts economic outcomes we were concerned about to begin with, naturally leads to potential policy implications. Institutions can differ in the importance they place on competitiveness and hence can affect gender differences in economic outcomes. I briefly show two such applications, one in Germany concerning the flexibility of education choices, and one in France concerning the role of affirmative action. I end with some thoughts on how to apply such behavioral institution design insights to the economics profession.

Introduction: Georg Weizsäcker (Humboldt University Berlin)