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Topic: Women in STEM

For a long time in society, women have been expected to stay home and take care of the house and the kids, and the men go out and work to pay the bills. But we are in the 21st century and women should be able to study any major they want to, but that is still not the case. There are still stereotypes that make women feel and think that they are not good enough or smart enough to study any major they are passionate about. Many times women opt-out of certain jobs because of these stereotypes. Other times women are taken out of certain jobs. The lack of women in STEM classes needs to be addressed because many colleges do not give support to women that want to major in the STEM field; thus, it is crucial that colleges support women who want to enter the STEM field by providing programs or clubs that will help them do well and graduate with a STEM degree.

Today, there are not that many women in the STEM field because not that many women are majoring in STEM subjects. Some examples of these types of subjects are computer science, robotics, engineering, mathematics, biology, chemistry, and many more. This is a problem because some stem jobs pay a lot more money and women are missing out. According to AAUW, an organization meant to help women advance, "Only 21% of engineering majors and 19% of computer science majors are women." This is very important because women are not given the advantage of the good opportunities these majors have to offer and the money they could be making. Furthermore, women are not going into these jobs because they are not majoring in these subjects. According to Western Governors University, even though "STEM is a growing occupational option," women are not studying for these fields. The source states, "Women make up just 18 percent of the bachelor's degrees, 30 percent of master's degrees, and 20 percent of the doctorate degrees. And what's worse, these statistics have gone down since 1997." It's a problem that women have stopped taking these classes because that is what creates the gender gap in the actual occupations later. We should not assume that women are not capable of taking the classes and should focus on figuring out why women do not major in STEM.

In fact, one of the reasons that women may not be majoring in STEM is because of stereotypes. Females are taught from a young age that STEM is not for them and they have to prove themselves. According to Alexia Fernández, "A researcher from Stanford found evidence that such stereotypes could account for girls' scoring, on average, nearly 20 points lower in the math portion of the SATs than they would otherwise." This is important because women should not be told what they can't do and what they can. Women should be able to do what they want without having to ask the permission of men or worrying what society thinks of their abilities. Women shouldn't have to prove themselves they are capable of studying whatever they want. And according to the Harvard Business Review, "Two-thirds of the women

interviewed, and two-thirds of the women surveyed, reported having to prove themselves over and over again.” Women are very capable of anything they set their mind to and they should not have to prove themselves, and because of these stereotypes women can not get the jobs they wish to.

However, many people can say that there are other jobs for women that they can do but why are they being kept out of STEM fields? Women shouldn't have to be kept out of a field they are passionate about. Yet some people believe women choose to not go into STEM. According to Maryville Online, many women study “social sciences, which often have more women than men.” This is important because many women are not going into the higher paying jobs that they can qualify for because they are going into fields that are “made for women.” A study published by the journal *Gender Studies* showed that because of gender norms, women go into fields that are supposedly more for women. The study said that the more a woman identifies as feminine, the less likely they are to choose “STEM and doctoral-track medicine majors” (Roll). People use these stereotypes to determine whether women are good at something and this keeps women from entering fields like STEM. Instead of women being judged by their abilities, they are judged by stereotypes. This is confirmed by the American Association of University Women. The association found that women’s STEM knowledge was underestimated and this resulted in 29% of the men hired being under performing while only 2% of women ended up being under performing. This shows that men are given a preference over women because some of those 29% could have been women capable of doing the job.



This is why we need to have programs in college that can help women achieve their goals in STEM fields. Women need to have the same opportunities that men have in these STEM fields. According to Harvey Mudd College, to help women succeed in STEM, they to “Revised its required introductory computer science course” and also “accommodate different levels of experience.” By revising the introductory computer science course they will be able to know what changes need to be made to help these women understand and accomplish the course. They allowed more people in with different types of STEM experience and this helped women join the course. This can help by giving women the opportunity/ tools they need in school will help women be more successful in STEM. Also by sharing women’s accomplishments we can help end biases. According to Stanford Graduate School of Business, “stereotypes cause women to be seen as less than they actually are and that’s what limits women’s advancements.” This is why we need to share women's accomplishments so that other women see the role models they have and be willing to follow their dreams and study what they want.



All in all, women deserve to go into the STEM field because there is a low percentage of women in STEM and this affects our society because this makes us think that women are not capable of doing any type of work and that they are just supposed to stay home and take care of their kids or have jobs that are “meant for women.” Therefore schools need to have more programs that can support women in STEM fields and end biases.

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