

Daya Sharon
STW
B Section
“Calculus Steers Women Away From STEM”

The article, “Calculus Steers Women Away From STEM”, by Lauren Camera, describes a study done by researchers at Colorado State University that asked 5,000 students how they felt about going into STEM careers after taking Calculus I. About 14% of men who switched out of STEM careers said it was because they didn’t feel that they understood the “ideas of Calculus” enough to continue to Calculus II. The number of women who provided the same reason for dropping out of a STEM career was more than double the number of men at 35%. The author then goes on to explain that most of the students who switched out because they felt they didn’t understand the subject had not received grades in Calculus that would have held them back in careers that they had switched out of. Another interesting point that the author brings up is the number of younger students (the example she uses is fourth-grade) who want to go into science as a career versus the number of college graduates who actually do go into STEM careers. As expected, the number of people who actually go into STEM careers drops due to a lack of understanding of Calculus. The number of women who switch out of STEM career paths because they don’t feel comfortable in Calculus is greater than the number of men who do the same, suggesting that calculus is what drives women out of STEM.

I found this article very interesting. I hadn’t realized that Calculus can have such a big impact on a student’s learning track, but I also see where these students get these thoughts. I have gotten good scores on tests before, even if I didn’t fully understand the information given, which probably says more about the tests than it does about me. I did, however, find it surprising that so many more girls don’t feel like they don’t understand Calculus and I wonder if this is related to the societal norm that men do math and science and women stay at home or

teach. This research is important because it provides a reason for women not being as involved in STEM as men are. Hopefully, there will be changes in the way these women are taught to encourage them to continue their path.

Calculus steers women away from STEM. Retrieved from

<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-07-21/calculus-steers-women-away-from-stem>