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Qualified, but not choosing STEM at university: unconscious influences on choice of study.

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Summary: This article offers explanations as to why good candidates for mathematics or physics degrees might opt to study subjects other than STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) subjects at university. Results come from analysis, informed by psychoanalytic theory and practice, of narrative-style interviews conducted with first-year undergraduates and from survey data. It is argued that psychoanalytic interpretations have a role in educational research. Also, it is shown that unconscious forces influenced young peoples' decision making. Implications for policy are discussed, in particular, the issues of (a) the role of commitment and (b) being good enough to study a STEM discipline.

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