

Stereotype Threat: An Enemy of Women in Business*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to increase knowledge about the gender gap in business, especially in domains traditionally considered to be male, and thus contribute to reducing this phenomenon. One of the possible explanations for this gap is stereotype threat: a situation when one is apprehensive of confirming a negative stereotype about their social group's competencies (Steele and Aronson, 1995). Such a situation commonly occurs in everyday life and can seriously affect the professional career of many women. The immediate effect of stereotype threat is deterioration of performance tasks from the stereotyped domain. If such a situation repeats, some women may withdraw from a "male" domain (e.g. Woodcock et al., 2012) because the emotional costs of having to prove that they can be as good as men are too high. Besides, studies by Tellhed and Björklund (2011) indicate that women under stereotype threat make lower salary requests. In this paper several methods of combating stereotype threat are reviewed. Particular attention was paid to the phenomenon of intellectual helplessness at school which, as research by Bedyńska and her colleagues (2018, 2019) shows, contributes to the formation of stereotype threat. Thus, the role of teachers and educators in preventing it is crucial. Several methods to prevent intellectual helplessness and thus stereotype threat in girls by teachers at school, are described.

Keywords: stereotype threat, women in business, intellectual helplessness, preventing stereotype threat