Identity Separation in Response to Stereotype Threat
Courtney von Hippel, Alice M. Walsh and Ariane Zouroudis

Social Psychological and Personality Science 2011 2: 317 originally published online 11 November 2010
DOI: 10.1177/1948550610390391

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://spp.sagepub.com/content/2/3/317

Published by:
SAGE
http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Association for Research in Personality
European Association of Social Psychology
Society of Experimental and Social Psychology

Additional services and information for Social Psychological and Personality Science can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://spp.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts
Subscriptions: http://spp.sagepub.com/subscriptions
Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav
Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
Citations: http://spp.sagepub.com/content/2/3/317.refs.html
Identity Separation in Response to Stereotype Threat

Courtney von Hippel1, Alice M. Walsh2, and Ariane Zouroudis2

Abstract
Despite widespread evidence for the performance costs of stereotype threat, little research has examined other psychological consequences, such as disengagement or disidentification. The present studies investigated such consequences of stereotype threat for women working at major international firms. Study 1 found that female leaders who experienced stereotype threat separated their feminine identities from their work-related (i.e., more masculine) identity. Study 2 extended this finding by demonstrating that even when the feminine identity comprised those characteristics that serve women well in the workplace (e.g., being understanding and aware of the feelings of others), female employees still engaged in identity separation after experiences of stereotype threat. These results suggest that stereotype threat is an ongoing concern in the workplace, and they provide evidence for psychological consequences of stereotype threat.

Keywords
stereotype threat, identity separation, working women, role models

Any individual can experience stereotype threat, or the psychological threat of confirming or being reduced to a negative stereotype (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). This concern can result in performance deficits when people attempt to perform difficult tasks in domains in which they are negatively stereotyped. Detrimental effects of stereotype threat on performance have been documented across a wide range of areas, including African Americans’ academic performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995), older adults’ memory (Hess, Auman, Colcombe, & Rahhal, 2003), and women’s math (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999) and driving (Yeung & von Hippel, 2008). Findings such as these provide convincing evidence that stereotype threat disrupts performance in a wide variety of domains, in part because of the load it places on working memory (Schmader & Johns, 2003).

Despite widespread evidence for the acute effects of stereotype threat, comparatively little research has examined the other half of Steele’s (1997) original proposal concerning disengagement or disidentification from domains in which people chronically experience stereotype threat. Disengagement has been described as a “defensive detachment of self-esteem from a particular domain” (Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001). In domains where people are chronically stereotyped (e.g., African Americans in academics), stigmatized individuals can cope with these threats by disengaging their self-esteem from their performance in the stereotyped domain (e.g., Cokley, 2002; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Osborne, 1995, 1997). Although such disengagement may be ego protective in the short term, it may come at a long-term cost because over time it appears to be associated with reduced motivation and performance (Crocker et al., 1998; Major & Schmader, 1998; Nussbaum & Steele, 2007; Schmader et al., 2001).

Another form of disengagement is to downplay the threatened identity (Steele et al., 2002). For example, people can decide that being a member of their group is not terribly important to them. Thus, a woman at work might come to believe that being female is not a central part of her identity. Alternatively, women might “split” their identity, by disidentifying with stereotyped aspects of their group identity while simultaneously maintaining positive identification with aspects of their identity that are unrelated to the stereotype (Pronin, Steele, & Ross, 2004). A similar strategy that threatened individuals may adopt is to separate their threatened identity from their performance-based identity (Settles, 2004). That is, by separating her identity as a female from her identity as an employee, a woman can emphasize her role as a skilled employee in an organization even when the skills are counterstereotypic for women. In this manner, women who experience stereotype threat may respond by differentiating between their female and worker roles. Recent evidence suggests that women working in male-dominated fields may indeed adopt this approach.

1 University of Queensland, St Lucia, Australia
2 University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

Corresponding Author:
Courtney von Hippel, University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD, Australia, 4072
Email: c.vonhippel@uq.edu.au

Downloaded from spp.sagepub.com at UQ Library on April 28, 2011
Specifically, female lawyers who self-reported higher levels of stereotype threat also indicated that they continually switched between their work selves and feminine selves (von Hippel, Isa, Ma, & Stokes, in press).

Unfortunately, this type of identity separation appears to have important costs. For example, female science students who experienced interference between their female and science identities reported greater depression and lower life satisfaction and self-esteem than students who did not experience this interference (Settles, 2004). Similarly, von Hippel et al. (in press) found that identity separation mediated the relationship between feelings of stereotype threat and negative job attitudes and intention to quit. These data suggest that some of the psychological cost that women experience from being stereotyped at work appears to be associated with feelings of interference between different aspects of one’s identity and the need to separate these components from one another.

Although von Hippel et al.’s (in press) research with female lawyers suggests that women respond to stereotype threat with identity separation and that identity separation has negative consequences for job attitudes, there are important limitations to that study. First, the data were correlational in nature, and thus it is not clear whether stereotype threat actually causes women to separate their work and feminine selves. Rather, it may be the case that women who separate their identities are more susceptible to experiences of stereotype threat, or some third factor may play a role in both stereotype threat and identity separation.

Second, in von Hippel et al. (in press) women were asked to report whether they felt their work self and feminine self were in conflict and whether they felt they had to switch back and forth between these two selves. This approach necessitates conscious awareness and a willingness to report identity separation and also raises the possibility that women might overreport this feeling. A more nuanced approach to identity separation would be to adopt a procedure from Pronin et al. (2004) in which women simply report how characteristic different traits are of themselves. This approach has the advantage that women are not required to introspect about how much their work and feminine selves are in conflict. Rather, identity separation is assessed by examining whether the relationship between feminine traits and more masculine work-related traits are sensitive to the presence versus absence of stereotype threat. If women respond to stereotype threat with identity separation, then the relationship between their levels of endorsement of feminine and more masculine work-related traits should be lower when they experience stereotype threat than when they do not, as they should be actively separating these two aspects of their selves.

**Study 1**

The goal of Study 1 was to address these two issues by manipulating stereotype threat and measuring the relationship between endorsement of feminine and masculine traits. We sought to manipulate stereotype threat in a manner that is consistent with Steele’s original theorizing while also reflecting the sources of threat that women are likely to be exposed to in their regular working day. Specifically, Steele et al. (2002) discussed the effect of *circumstantial cues* on stereotype threat, or subtle cues within the environment that can trigger feelings of stereotype threat. For example, the proportion of women or African Americans in a performance context has been shown to affect feelings of stereotype threat and performance for women and African Americans, respectively (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000; Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002). The seemingly innocuous cue of a low percentage of other individuals who are in one’s group seems to communicate to the threatened group that their behavior may be under increased scrutiny and that members of their group might not belong in this context. We adapted this manipulation for an organizational context by highlighting the gender imbalance at the top levels of the organizational structure, thereby manipulating stereotype threat in a manner that is consistent with women’s daily work experiences.

**Method**

**Participants, procedure, and measures.** Participants were 188 female employees in the Australian offices of an international accounting and consulting firm who responded to an email from their company with a web link inviting them to complete an on-line survey. Their positions within the organization were senior managers (N = 136), principals (N = 29), and partners (N = 23). The average tenure for women in the organization was 6.9 years (SD = 4.7) and the average tenure for women in their current position was 2.3 years (SD = 2.6).

Employees were randomly assigned to conditions when they accessed the on-line survey. The stereotype threat manipulation was adapted from Murphy, Steele, and Gross (2007), such that half of the participants were reminded of the percentage of female partners in the firm. Specifically, participants in the stereotype threat condition read, “Thank you for choosing to complete this questionnaire seeking to understand why only 10% of the partners at [firm name] are females.” In contrast, participants in the control condition read, “Thank you for choosing to complete this questionnaire investigating employees’ self-concepts, goals, and experiences at work.”

**Identity separation.** A trait inventory of 10 items was developed to measure the extent to which participants endorsed feminine and masculine qualities. Feminine qualities were gentle, tender, family-oriented, and concerned with activities outside work. These feminine traits were chosen based on the fact that they are stereotypic of women and are the same traits used to describe ineffective leaders (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Schein, 1973). Masculine qualities were analytical, independent, authoritative, self-reliant, aggressive, and desires responsibility. These traits are stereotypic of a masculine and effective leadership style (Eagly, Makhijani, Klonsky, & 1992; Heilman et al., 1989; Schein, 1973). Employees indicated how characteristic each
trait was of them using a 5-point scale anchored by 1 (uncharacteristic of me) and 5 (characteristic of me). Scores on the two scales were computed for each respondent by calculating the mean score on the trait items that composed each scale (α = .74 for the masculine traits, α = .73 for the feminine traits).

**Stereotype threat manipulation check.** To assess whether the manipulation affected feelings of stereotype threat, a single item was borrowed from von Hippel et al.’s (in press) measure of stereotype threat among working women (i.e., “Some people feel that I have less managerial ability because I’m a woman”). Participants responded using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Along with this manipulation check a variety of items were included that were of interest to the organization but irrelevant to the current research (i.e., attitudes toward various workplace policies and procedures). At the end of the questionnaire, participants provided demographic information relating to their age, current position in the organization, and tenure.

**Results**

**Preliminary analyses.** Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the measures. ANOVA was used to determine if the stereotype threat manipulation affected trait endorsement. Results indicate that the threat manipulation did not affect endorsement of the feminine traits, $F(1, 172) = 0.25, p > .61$, or the masculine traits, $F(1, 172) = 2.75, p > .09$.

**Manipulation check.** The effect of the manipulation on women’s feelings of stereotype threat was assessed using ANOVA. Results indicate that women who were reminded about the percentage of male partners in the firm experienced greater stereotype threat than women who did not receive this information, $F(1, 167) = 7.48, p < .01$. This finding should be interpreted in the context of the fact that the female employees were well aware of their firm’s gender ratio prior to our reminder. Thus, only the accessibility of this information varied in the two conditions.

**Identity separation.** According to our hypotheses the strength of the relationship between endorsement of feminine and masculine traits should differ by stereotype threat condition. Specifically, feminine traits should be less strongly related to masculine traits in the stereotype threat condition, demonstrating that women are separating their identity in response to stereotype threat. To test this possibility we used moderated regression, with the interaction term representing the product of the centered versions of stereotype threat manipulation (coded as 1 and –1) and endorsement of female traits. In the first step of the model, endorsement of masculine traits was regressed on the main effect of condition and endorsement of feminine traits ($β = –.12, p > .10$ and $β = .16, p < .05$, respectively). In the second step of the model the interaction term was added as a predictor variable. Consistent with the hypotheses, the interaction term was a significant predictor of endorsement of masculine traits ($β = –.33, p < .001$). To decompose this interaction, simple slopes were assessed by regressing the masculine traits on the feminine traits separately in each condition. For women in the stereotype threat condition, the masculine and feminine traits were unrelated ($β = –.02, p > .85$). In contrast, women in the control condition showed a positive relationship between the masculine and feminine traits ($β = .29, p < .01$), suggesting that these two domains of their personality were integrated when stereotype threat was not made salient.

If the effect of the manipulation on identity separation is the result of stereotype threat as predicted, then this same interaction pattern should emerge with the self-report measure of stereotype threat. To test this possibility we again used moderated regression, with the interaction term representing the product of the centered versions of the self-report stereotype threat measure and endorsement of female traits. In the first step of the model, endorsement of masculine traits was regressed on stereotype threat and endorsement of feminine traits ($β = –.10, p > .18$ and $β = .17, p < .05$, respectively). In the second step of the model the interaction term was added as a predictor variable. Consistent with the earlier analyses, the interaction term was a significant predictor of endorsement of masculine traits ($β = –.21, p < .01$). To decompose this interaction, simple slopes were estimated at one standard deviation above and below the mean for stereotype threat. As can be seen in Figure 1, the masculine and feminine traits were unrelated for women who experienced relatively high levels of stereotype threat (β = –.01, ns). In contrast, women who experienced relatively low levels of stereotype threat showed a positive relationship between the masculine and feminine traits ($β = .40, p < .01$).

**Discussion**

The results of Study 1 indicate that women separate their work and feminine identities when feeling stereotype threat, but this separation was between traits that serve women well in senior and leadership roles and traits that could handicap women in such roles. As a consequence, it is unclear whether identity separation will also emerge with traits that are stereotypically feminine but that could serve a leader well. For example, “feminine” styles of leadership are characterized by a focus on interpersonal relationships, with female leaders perceived to be more sensitive, warm, and tactful than their male counterparts (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). This more interpersonal leadership style (termed transformational leadership) can sometimes be more effective than traditional
“transactional” styles of leadership and is also more common among women (e.g., Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996; Eagly et al., 2003).

If women experience stereotype threat at work, it is possible that they might feel the need to separate their female identity from their work identity even with feminine traits that could serve them well as leaders. That is, women who experience stereotype threat might feel that they need to adopt a more masculine approach to their work so that they are not targeted by negative stereotypes. We tested this possibility in Study 2 by changing the feminine traits to characteristics that are positively associated with female leadership styles.

Study 2 also extended the findings of Study 1 by using a different manipulation of stereotype threat. Participants in Study 2 read about a male or female partner at their firm prior to completing the identity separation measure. Research suggests that comparison with other successful women reduces stereotype threat, whereas comparisons with successful men induces it (Marx & Roman, 2002; Marx, Stapel, & Muller, 2005; von Hippel et al., in press). Such comparisons with leaders at work also provide an ecologically valid manipulation of stereotype threat, as they appear to be a commonplace occurrence (von Hippel et al., in press).

This manipulation also enabled us to examine a possible reason why comparisons with successful women do not induce stereotype threat. On one hand, it is possible that simply by virtue of their shared category membership, successful women communicate to other women that they too can succeed. Alternatively, it might be the case that successful women are nonthreatening because they often have stereotypically female characteristics, such as family responsibilities. Thus, in the current experiment the manipulation of gender of the comparison person was crossed with a manipulation of discussion of family matters, such that participants were presented with either a male or a female partner who either mentioned or did not mention family activities in his or her profile. If successful women are not stereotype threatening because they demonstrate that success is possible even for women who occupy stereotypically nurturant roles such as being a mother, then mention of family should influence whether women are stereotype threatening. Alternatively, if female leaders are nonthreatening simply by virtue of their demonstration that members of their category can succeed, then mention of family should be unnecessary for women to be nonthreatening. Study 2 examined these possibilities.

**Study 2**

**Method**

*Participants.* Participants were 343 female employees of another international accounting and consulting firm in Australia who received an email from their company with a web link inviting them to complete an online survey. The women who responded held various positions within the firm: analyst (n = 99), senior analyst (n = 76), manager (n = 88), director (n = 59), and partner (n = 21). The average tenure at the firm was 4.19 years (SD = 4.26).

**Design.** The study involved a 2 (comparison target gender: male vs. female) × 2 (family activities and interests: discussed vs. not discussed) between-subjects design. Participants were asked to read a personal profile of a leader at their firm. Half the participants read about a male partner and half read about a female partner. The biographies were sourced from the company’s website, and both partners were chosen for being among the top 10 employee mentors. Although the partners worked in different service lines, both were based in the same office, both had children, and both had been working at the firm for nearly 20 years. The partner profiles consisted of a few short paragraphs copied from the firm’s website.

Because the male partner’s biography focused exclusively on his career path within the firm but the female partner’s biography discussed her career path in addition to her interests outside work, modifications to these biographies were made to create the full two-way design. For the female partner we removed the description of her family and outside work interests for the “not discussed” condition. For the male partner, we sought additional information from him to supplement his original profile so we could include his family and outside work interests for the “discussed” condition.

To ensure that participants read the employee profiles, they were told that they would later be asked some questions about the information presented to them. At the conclusion of the survey participants were asked whether the person was male or female, whether they knew this person prior to taking the survey, and whether they consider this person to be a positive role model.

**Measures.** As in Study 1, a trait inventory was developed to measure the extent to which participants identified with various
feminine and masculine traits. This study used feminine traits that are characteristic of successful managers, specifically intuitive, understanding, sensitive, warm, and aware of feelings of others. These traits were selected from Schein’s (1973) Descriptive Index on the basis that they were traits that described good managers and from Bem’s (1974) Sex Role Inventory on the basis that they were feminine traits. The masculine traits were the same as those in Study 1 with five additional traits such as assertive and willing to take a stand. Employees indicated how characteristic each trait was of them using a 3-point scale, 1 = uncharacteristic of me, 2 = somewhat characteristic of me, and 3 = characteristic of me. Scores on the two scales were computed for each respondent by calculating the mean score on the trait items that composed each scale (z = .82 for masculine traits, z = .73 for feminine traits). Participants then answered a series of questions that were of interest to the firm but irrelevant to the current research followed by some basic demographics.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the measures. A 2 (partner gender) × 2 (family or outside interests mentioned) ANOVA was used to determine if the manipulations affected trait endorsement. The manipulations resulted in no main effects or interactions for the endorsement of the feminine traits, F(1, 339) ≤ 2.6, ps > .10. The manipulations did affect endorsement of the masculine traits, however. As can be seen in Table 2, there was no main effect for gender, F(1, 339) = 1.28, p = .25, but a main effect emerged for family, F(1, 339) = 5.12, p < .05, and an interaction emerged between family and gender, F(1, 339) = 4.64, p < .05. Simple effects analyses revealed that no difference emerged in endorsement of masculine traits as a function of whether family was mentioned when the partner was male, F(1, 165) = 0.001, p = .97, but when the partner was female masculine traits were endorsed at a greater rate when she did not mention family than when she did, F(1, 174) = 8.33, p < .01.

Manipulation check. The questions at the end of the survey regarding the employees’ biographies were used to check the stereotype threat manipulation. The question “Was this person male or female?” was answered incorrectly by two women who read about the female leader and by four women who read about the male leader. These six participants were excluded from all analyses. Of the participants who read about the female partner, 61% said they knew of him before reading about her in the survey, and 55% of the participants who read about the male partner said they knew of him before completing the survey (χ² = 1.10, df = 1, p > .25). Thus, the male and female partner appeared to be equivalently well-known. The female partner was considered a positive role model by more participants (91%) than the male partner (79%; χ² = 8.46, df = 1, p < .01).

Identity separation. As in Study 1, moderated regression was used to examine the relationship between the manipulation and identity separation. In the first step of the model, endorsement of masculine traits was regressed on the main effects of comparison target gender and endorsement of feminine traits (β = .04, p > .48 and β = .33, p < .001, respectively). In the second step of the model the interaction between endorsement of feminine traits and the main effect of comparison target gender was added as a predictor variable. This interaction term was a significant predictor of endorsement of masculine traits (β = .10, p = .05). Consistent with results of Study 1, the relationship between feminine and masculine traits was stronger in the female role model condition (β = .41, p < .001) than in the male role model condition (β = .21, p < .05). These results suggest that women reacted to the threat manipulation by separating their work and feminine identities.

The same data analytic strategy was then employed to examine the effect of discussing family or outside interests on identity separation. In the first step of the model, endorsement of masculine traits was regressed on the main effects of whether family or outside interests were discussed and endorsement of feminine traits (β = .09, p > .07 and β = .33, p < .001, respectively). In the second step of the model the interaction between endorsement of feminine traits and discussion of family or outside interests was added as a predictor variable. The interaction term from this analysis was not a significant predictor of endorsement of masculine traits (β = .07 p > .13).

In a final model, the three main effects were entered in the first step, the two-way interactions were entered in the second step, and then the three-way interaction among comparison target gender, mention of outside or family interests, and endorsement of feminine traits was entered in the final step. No three-way interaction emerged in this analysis (β = .001, p > .97).

Table 2. Study 2 Means and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female partner</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Male partner</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family &amp; outside interests discussed</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine trait endorsement</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine trait endorsement</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of this study demonstrate that social comparison with men causes women to separate their identity, even when the feminine traits are characteristic of good leaders. These effects were not a function of whether the partners discussed their families and interests outside work. Whether comparison with the male partner induced stereotype threat or comparison with the female partner alleviated it (or both effects emerged) is unclear from these findings, but the relative effect of male versus female comparisons is apparent.

An important question raised by the current research is why male and female role models lead to different levels of identity separation even with feminine traits that potentially serve women well in the workforce. One possibility is that the success of the female role model tacitly suggests that feminine styles of leadership are appropriate in upper management, indicating that women can integrate masculine and feminine work identities without fear of negative consequences. In contrast, the male role model may tacitly suggest that masculine leadership styles are required in upper management, and thus women may compartmentalize their masculine and feminine work identities to ensure that they rely on a more masculine approach to work. Such a strategy would help prevent women from unintentionally vacillating between feminine and masculine approaches at work, which could happen if both sets of traits were integrated.

General Discussion

Given the pervasive stereotypes about female abilities in the workplace (e.g., Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002), female employees are likely to experience subtle but common stereotype threat. The present studies extend prior research by examining the effect of these subtle stereotype threats on identity separation among women working in traditionally masculine fields. Across two studies, women who were exposed to information suggesting that they might not belong in the upper echelons of their organization engaged in identity separation. These results are consistent with earlier research suggesting that women who experience stereotype threat may selectively disidentify from aspects of their gender to make the negative stereotype less applicable to them (Pronin et al., 2004; von Hippel et al., in press). These differences in identity patterns provide evidence that women are reshaping their identities in response to stereotype threat.

Identity separation may be an ego-protective strategy for women, but there are also negative mental health consequences for women who feel that their female identity cannot be expressed while enacting their work identity (Settles, 2004; Settles, Sellers, & Damas, 2002). In our prior research we have found that identity separation is associated with a lack of feeling of belonging at work (von Hippel et al., in press). This form of disengagement from work and the organization is in turn associated with a variety of negative job attitudes (Brown, 1996; Saks, 2006; von Hippel et al., in press). Furthermore, identity separation is also associated with reduced job satisfaction and elevated intentions to turnover. Results such as these indicate that stereotype threat is an important concern for organizations and the women who work in them.

An important issue that cannot be addressed with the current methodology is whether identity separation is a temporary response to stereotype threat or is a more permanent adaptation. The answer to this question may depend on the frequency and extent of encounters with stereotype threat. Perhaps temporary strategies are sufficient to combat occasional stereotype threat, whereas more chronic exposure may require more enduring adaptations. Further research is required to understand whether identity separation is a stable individual difference and to what degree identity separation may change within an individual over time.

Gender stereotypes have persisted in spite of increased participation of women in the workforce and the call for diversity in management (Powell et al., 2002). Thus, stereotype threat in the workplace is unlikely to disappear in the near future. For this reason, future research should consider strategies to buffer women from the effects of stereotype threat. Study 2 points to the potential of female role models to help alleviate stereotype threat for women. Celebrating the success of women leaders within organizations and providing female mentors may lessen the threat of gender stereotypes for women working in male-dominated fields.

Finally, as with any research it is important to evaluate the merits of the current findings in light of their limitations. The field setting of these studies created both strengths and weaknesses. On the strength side, care was taken to use a threat manipulation that was similar to the information employees were already exposed to at work. In Study 1, the threat manipulation regarding the percentage of female partners was taken from statistics that had been distributed to all employees earlier in the year. In Study 2, the male and female comparison standards were similarly recognizable to employees and had similar career backgrounds. Thus, the manipulations had high ecological validity. We were limited, however, in the nature and number of the questions we could ask these busy executives, and thus possible mediators and moderators that could be easily addressed in the laboratory were not pursued. Nevertheless, the current studies allowed an examination of the causal role of stereotype threat in a naturalistic setting and also provided evidence that stereotype threat is a real concern in organizations. The real-world relevance of stereotype threat has been a contentious topic in organizational psychology (Cullen, Hardison, & Sackett, 2004; Sackett, 2003), and the current studies add to the growing evidence that stereotype threat manifests itself in a variety of ways outside the laboratory.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Financial Disclosure/Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.
Note

1. The results from this study are identical when only the masculine traits from Study 1 are used in the analyses.

References


**Bios**

**Courtney von Hippel** is in the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland. Her research interests focus on intergroup relations, stereotyping, and prejudice.

**Alice M. Walsh** received her Masters in Organizational Psychology from the University of New South Wales. She is an Organizational Change Management professional at Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

**Ariane Zouroudis** received her Masters degree in Organizational Psychology from the University of New South Wales. She leads the internal Learning & Development programs at Ethos Corporation in Sydney, Australia.