

Stereotype Threat and Burnout Among University Students
Studying in Opposite-Gender Dominant Fields

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BPsych (Hons)

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Clinical Psychology.

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November 2018

Declarations

Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library*, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the copyright Act 1968.

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Statement of Authorship

I hereby certify that the research presented in this thesis was conducted under the appropriate supervision of Dr Ken Sutton and that I was responsible for the conceptualisation of the project, conducting the literature review, formulating the hypotheses, designing the study, selecting the appropriate methodology and collating the measures, participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, interpreting the research findings, and editing the manuscript.

Statement of Manuscript Style

The manuscript section of this submission has been written in accordance with publication instructions for *Sex Roles* (see Appendix A). All else has been written in accordance with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association – Sixth Edition (2010).

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Ken Sutton for his supervision of this project over the past two years. Without his willingness and support to undertake such an endeavour, this project would not have seen completion. I would also like to thank the Strategy, Planning and Performance (SPP) team of the University of Newcastle, who provided us with key data for participant recruitment, as well as Mr Kim Colyvas, who provided guidance for our statistical analyses. Thank you to my family and friends, who have provided unwavering support, especially when I have needed it most. Finally, I would like to thank my fiancé, Rhys – you make everything possible.

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Funding

The authors disclose that the University of Newcastle School of Psychology provided funding to compensate participants for their participation in the study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Abstract

Previous research suggests that females who work in male dominated fields may be at risk of experiencing burnout related to stereotype-threat. Other research has suggested that how strongly an individual identifies with the negatively stereotyped group, and the level of strain in peer relationships, may play a role in the experience of stereotype threat related burnout. This research aimed to investigate whether university students who study in fields dominated by the opposite gender also experience burnout related to stereotype threat, and whether gender identity strength and strain in classroom relationships influence the stereotype threat experience. We invited full-time university students who were among the minority gender in their field to complete an online questionnaire. Our male sample consisted of 58 students identifying as male and studying nursing, occupational therapy, social work, or early childhood teaching, while our female sample consisted of 68 students identifying as female and studying engineering or computer science. Our results suggested that both male and female students studying in opposite gender dominant fields may be at risk of experiencing burnout related to stereotype threat, and that gender identity strength may influence some of the negative effects of stereotype threat. Our results also suggested that strain in classroom relationships appears to play a role in stereotype threat related burnout among males studying in female-dominated fields, but not for females studying in male dominated fields. The implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: Stereotype threat, burnout, interpersonal strain, gender identity, university students