



05 FEB 2019 WORKING PAPER SUMMARIES

Stereotypes and Belief Updating

by Katherine B. Coffman, Manuela Collis, and Leena Kulkarni

Increasing evidence demonstrates that stereotyped beliefs drive key economic decisions. This paper shows the significant role of self-stereotyping in predicting beliefs about one's own ability. Stereotypes do not just affect beliefs about ability when information is scarce. In fact, stereotypes color the way information is incorporated into beliefs, perpetuating initial biases.

Author Abstract

We explore how beliefs respond to noisy information about own ability across a range of tasks, with a particular focus on how gender stereotypes impact belief updating. Participants in our experiments take tests of their ability across different domains. Absent feedback, beliefs of own ability are strongly influenced by gender stereotypes. We then provide noisy feedback about own absolute performance to participants and elicit posterior beliefs. Gender stereotypes have significant predictive power for posterior beliefs, both through their influence on prior beliefs (as predicted by a Bayesian model) and through their influence on updating. Both men and women's beliefs are more responsive to information in gender congruent domains than gender incongruent domains. This is primarily driven by differential reactions to exogenously received good news about own ability: both men and women react more to good news when it arrives in a gender congruent domain than when it arrives in a gender incongruent domain. Our results have important implications for understanding how feedback shapes gender gaps in self-assessments.

Paper Information

- Full Working Paper Text (pdf)
- Working Paper Publication Date: January 20129
- HBS Working Paper Number: HBS Working Paper #19-068
- Faculty Unit(s): Negotiation, Organizations & Markets

BROWSE POPULAR TOPICS

[LEADERSHIP](#)[ENTREPRENEURSHIP](#)[GENDER](#)[NEGOTIATION](#)

