Feeling out of place: How negative stereotypes reduce social approach motivation

Research shows that negative stereotypes can have a broad variety of negative consequences. However, not much is known about the consequences of negative stereotypes on interpersonal relationships. We will present and discuss two series of studies. In the first, we showed that the activation of negative gender stereotypes decreases female students' social approach motivation toward people related to the academic domain and that the relationship between stereotype activation and social approach motivation was mediated by a reduced sense of belonging to the domain (Study 1a: N = 79, Study 1b: N = 164, Study 2: N = 100, Study 3: N = 135). Next, we aimed to replicate these findings in the domain of negative age stereotypes. We hypothesized that when older employees internalize negative age stereotypes they feel insecure about their belongingness to the workplace, which has negative consequences for their social approach motivation. Four out of five studies and an aggregate analysis with a total of N = 1,306 older employees (age 50–76 years) supported this hypothesis. We conclude that negative stereotypes can be detrimental to the quality of people's social lives.

Primary authors: MARTINY, Sarah (UiT The Arctic University of Norway);   NIKITIN, Jana (Universitaet Wein)

Presenters: MARTINY, Sarah (UiT The Arctic University of Norway);   NIKITIN, Jana (Universitaet Wein)

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