

Abstract

Studies have shown that stereotypes influence people's behavior at work, their relationships with their co-workers and their judgments in the workplace. The following is a qualitative research study that uses in-depth interviews to explore the impact and influence of gender stereotypes on women working in the male-dominated workplace. Conducted in the investment banking division of a major financial institution in Copenhagen, Denmark, the study investigates the claim that women are expected to maintain a certain level of femininity to be successful, and examines what happens when women enter traditionally male-gendered fields such as investment banking. The study also examines the cognitive operations involved in stereotype-influenced thinking that may affect women's judgments and behaviors in the workplace. Discourse analysis revealed that the participants consider "fitting in" with the male environment more essential to career success than maintaining a level of femininity. Most of the participants tend to perceive themselves as treated similarly to the men, yet they experience social exclusion and other challenges that may be hindering career advancement. These and related findings support the idea that gender stereotyping is often implicit and even below the level of conscious awareness. Suggestions for reducing the impact of gender stereotypes in male-dominated work environments are offered in closing.