

Stereotypes and realities

from the perspective of a female center leader

Dorthe Berntsen

“Though it is true that a small percentage of women are as clever as clever men, on the whole intellect is a masculine speciality...”

Hawk, 1920

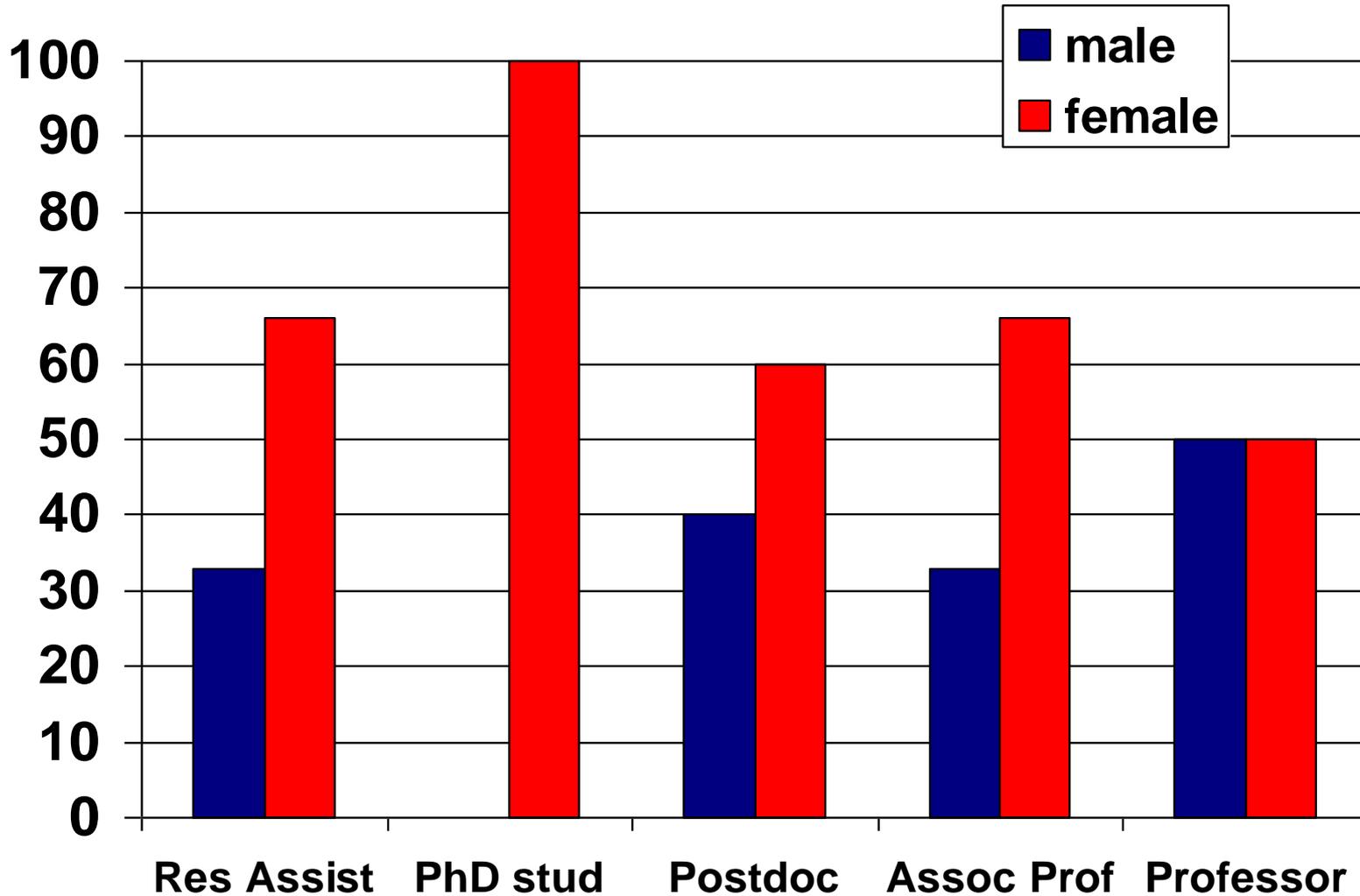


Center on Autobiographical Memory Research [CON AMORE]

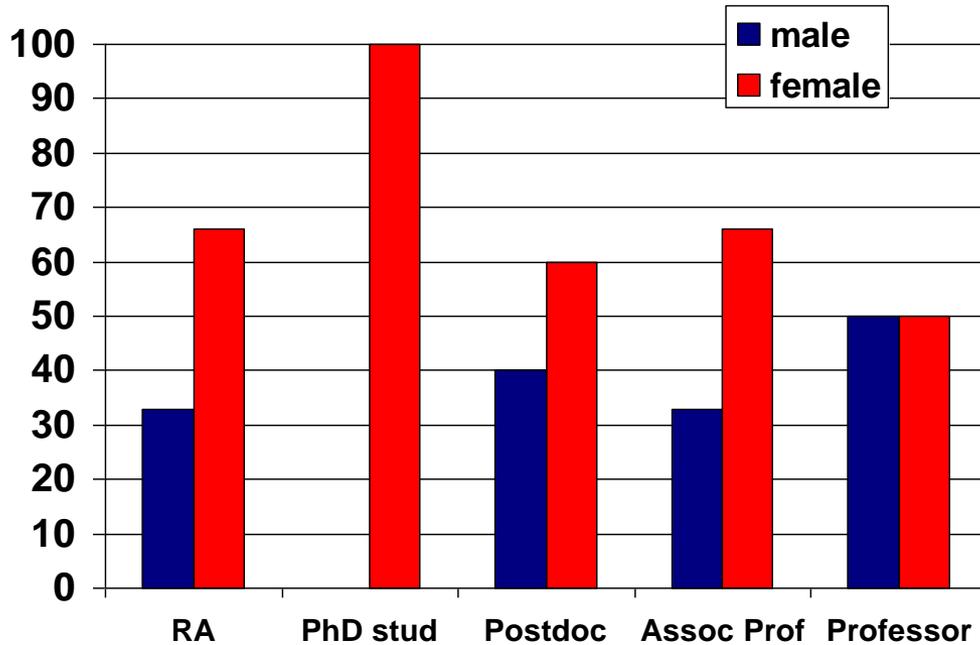
- 84 mio DKK from DNRF (2010-2019)
- Located at **Dept. of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences** at Aarhus University
- ~25 participants
- ~70% female



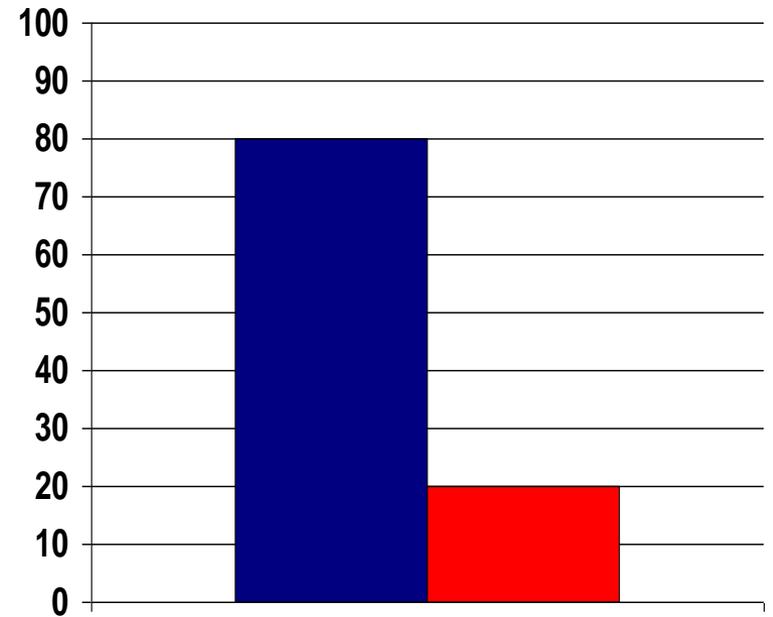
Percent female and male participants at CON AMORE by type of position



Percent female and male participants by type of position



Percent female and male professors at the Department of Psychology, AU.



Outline for the rest of my talk:

- Stereotype threat
- Maternity leave



Stereotype threat

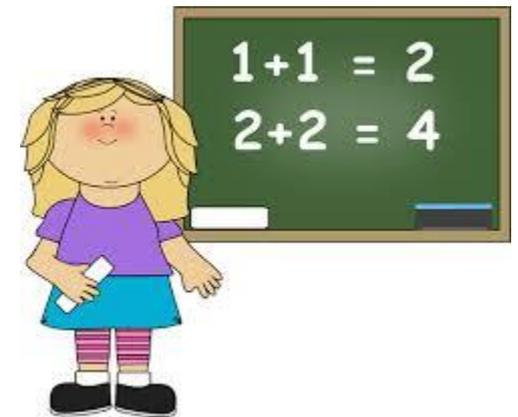
“There was an enormous body of masculine opinion to the effect that nothing would be expected of women intellectually. [...] There would always have been that assertion--you cannot do this, you are incapable of doing that--to protect against.”

Virginia Woolf (A room of one's own, chapter 3)

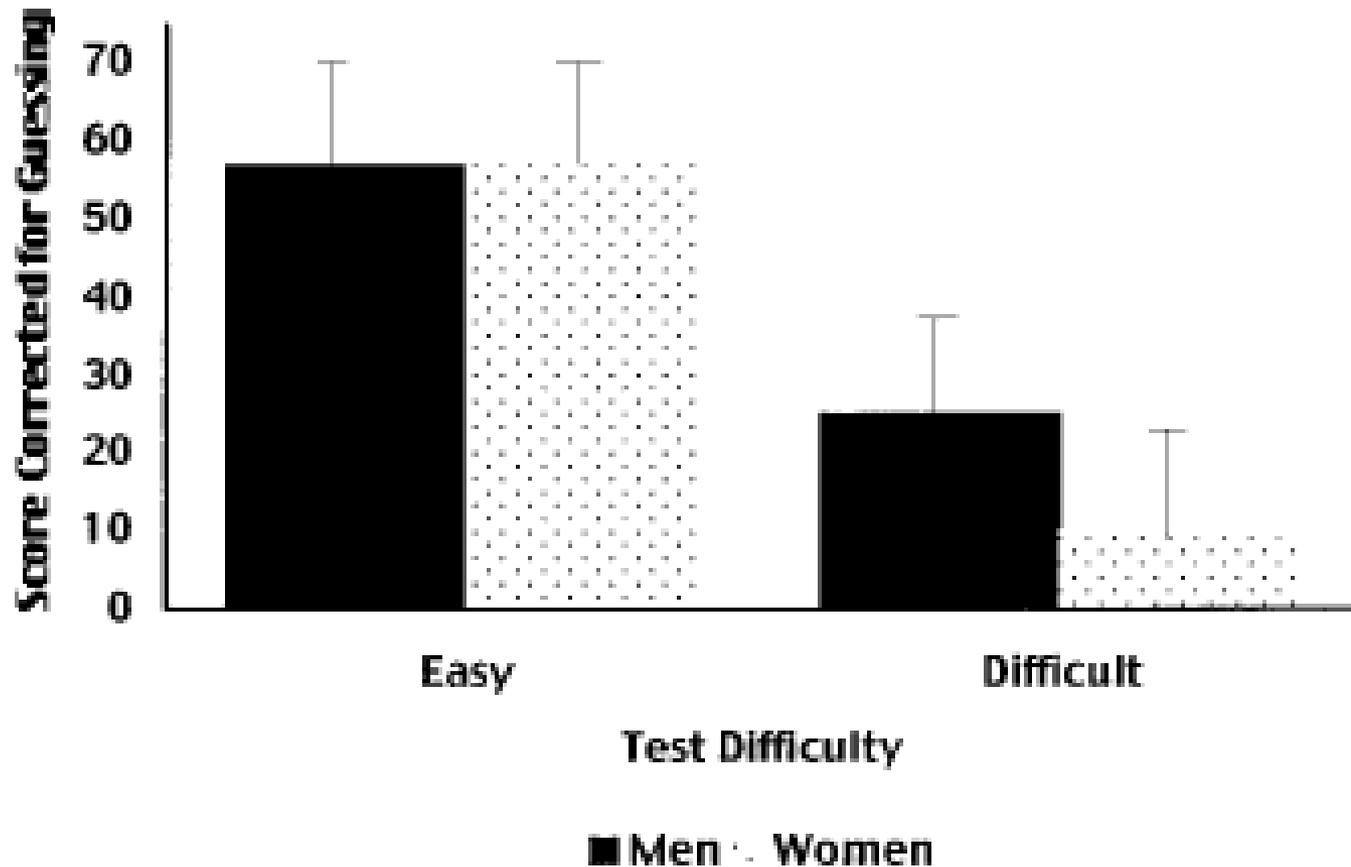
Stereotype threat

= The fear of being judged by a negative stereotype

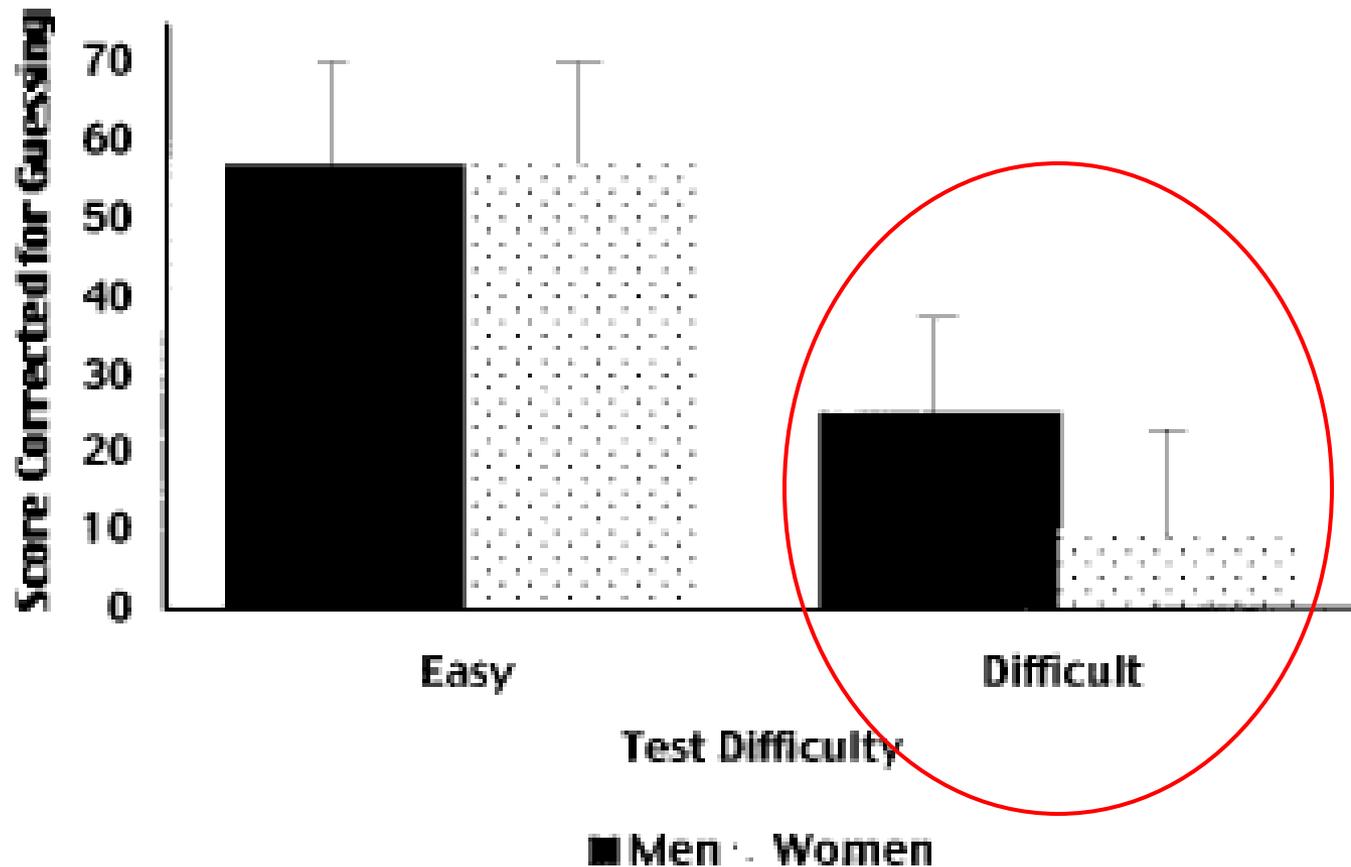
Stereotype threat is known to reduce performance



Performance of males and female on easy versus difficult math test



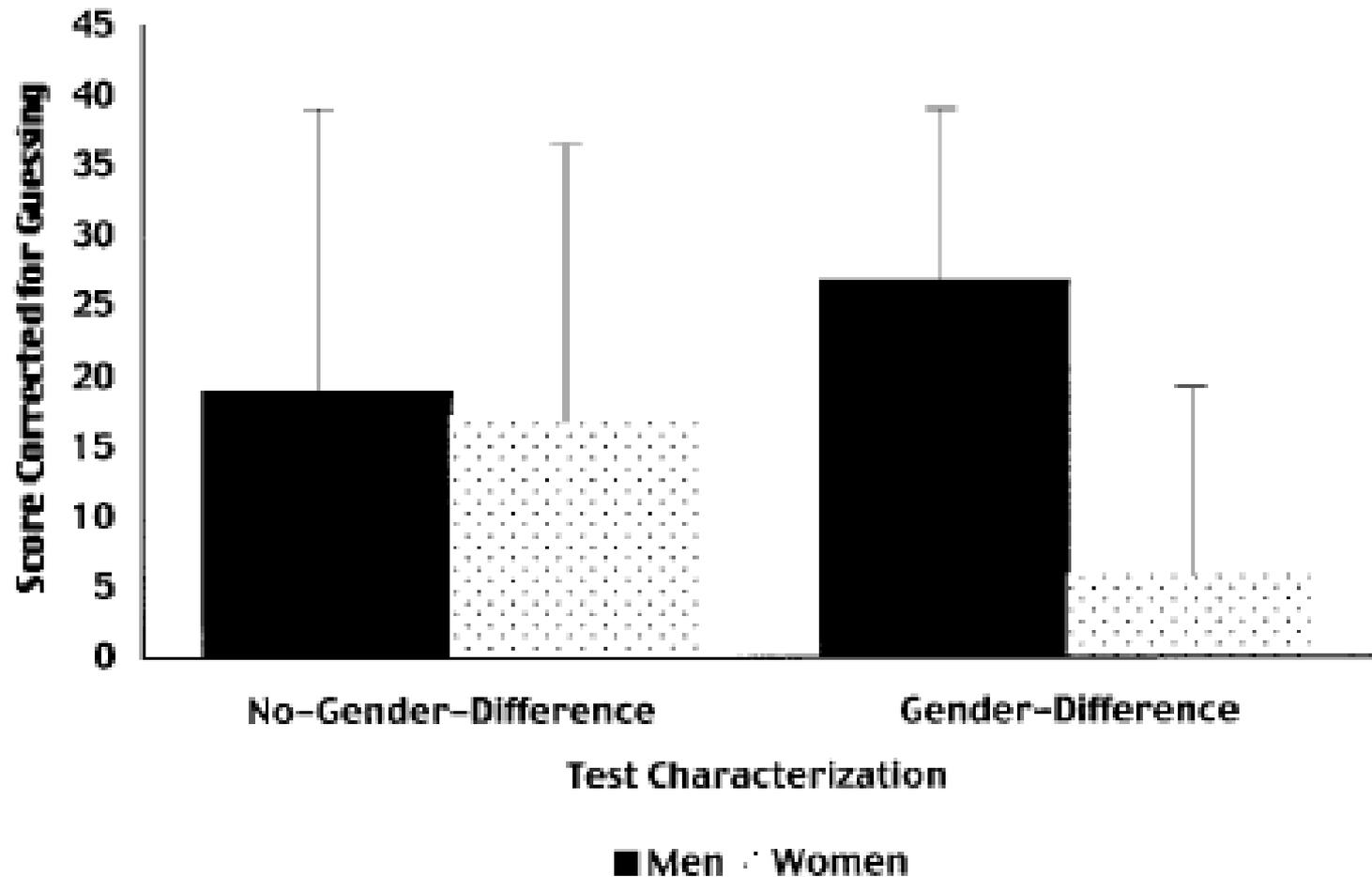
Performance of males and female on easy versus difficult math test



Stereotype threat, continued

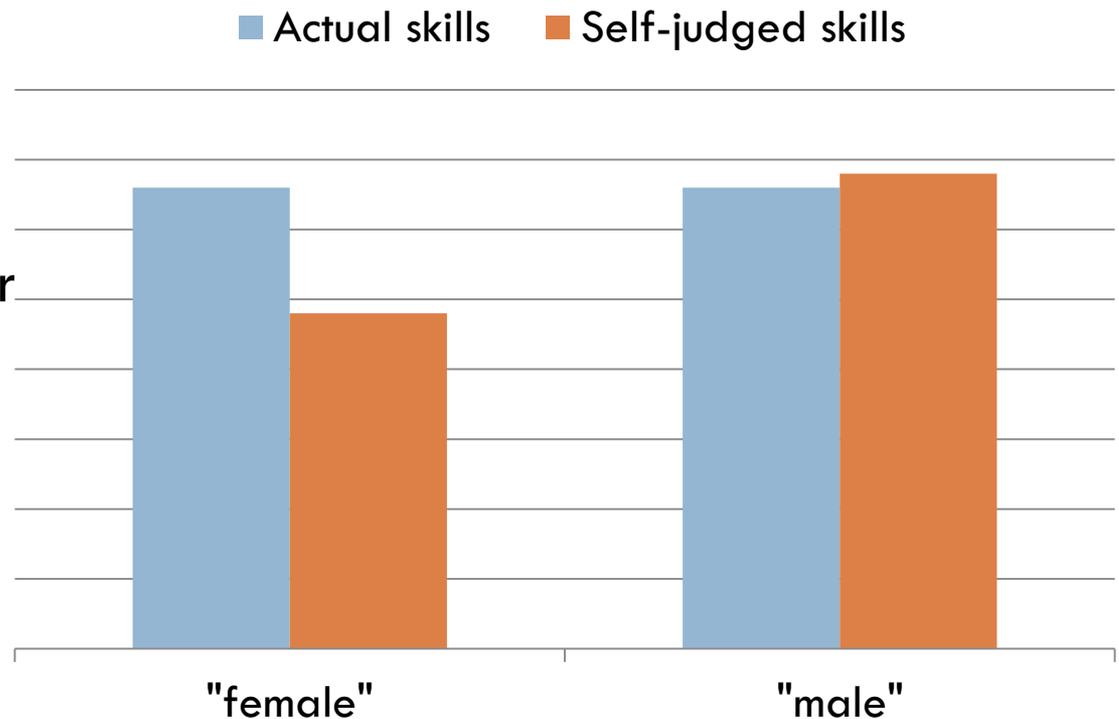
- They then took the difficult test, divided it into halves and gave the two halves under different conditions:
- A: Where they said: **"we normally see no gender differences on this test"**
- B: Where they said **"we normally see gender differences on this test"**

Performance of males and female when told "we normally see gender differences on this test" versus "we normally se no gender differences on this test"



Stereotype threat may lead women to misperceive their own academic abilities:

- Women may under-sell own ideas
- Under-perceive opportunities
- Under-state implications of their findings
- Over-estimate importance of critique
- Become too cautious/less ambitious



So I thought I could get a long way by:

- Coaching female (and male) junior researchers
- Helping them to see and reach for opportunities (yes, you can do it!)
- Giving them major responsibilities (1st author roles) for projects
- But then I ran into another problem...

MATERNITY LEAVE

- Since 2010, my center has had six maternity leaves of 9-12 months duration
- Each had implications for projects: the key person disappeared
 - Delayed publications
 - Stranded projects
 - Many daily problems (due to replacing the person on leave by another, maybe less trained person)
- For those employed on the grant, the grant covers the salary during the birth leave (~250.000 DKK per birth leave)
- Very risky to give young female researchers central roles in team work

Birth leave – professional consequences

- Young women become viewed as weaker team players (unstable labor)
- It can be seen as too risky to give young women central responsibilities in research teams; consequences:
 - Women get fewer 1st authorships
 - Weaker networks
 - Less experience with leadership
 - etc

Birth leave – something has to change

- We may not need YDUN, FREJA, and ear marked positions
- Let us start by enforcing justice and fairness with regard to birth leave
- ‘Maternity’ leave should be much more evenly shared between mothers and fathers
- Enforced by law (?)
- External grants given to research projects should **not** cover salary expenses during birth leave

Thank you

“We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained.”

Marie Curie



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