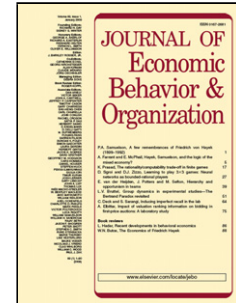


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## How Competitive are Female Professionals? A Tale of Identity Conflict

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### Abstract

We develop and test experimentally the argument that gender/family and/or professional identities, activated through priming, influence preference for competition. We focus on female professionals for whom these identities may conflict and male professionals for whom they may be reinforcing. We primed MBA-student participants by administering questionnaires concerning either gender/family or professional issues. Subsequently, participants undertook a real-effort task and chose between piece-rate and competitive-tournament compensation. For females, professional priming resulted in a significantly greater preference for competition than gender/family priming. Priming had significantly different effects for males. This contrast highlights an identity conflict for female professionals, not present for males.

**Keywords:** Gender, Competitiveness, Identity Conflict, Priming, Experiment.

**JEL Classification:** C91, D03, J16.

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