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Why Do Women Favor In-group Competition? Evidence From an Incentivized Choice Experiment

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to disentangle the mechanisms that drive women's typically observed higher competition willingness in same-gender compared to mixed-gender settings. We conduct an incentivized online choice experiment with 883 non-standard subjects, 442 of them female, with varying compensation schemes that ruled inter alia the gender-mix of the competitors group. Our framed field experiment replicates the finding that women are on average more eager to engage in same-gender than mixed-gender competition. We can show that, while the mechanisms discussed in the literature (such as self-confidence, risk aversion, ability) are related to a woman's general willingness to compete, they do not contribute to explaining the preference for same-gender competition. We therefore advocate this preference to women's stereotypical beliefs about their own gender group's abilities.

Keywords: preferences for competition; gender; group composition; self-confidence

JEL: C99, D83, J16

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