

The main objective of the project is to identify the causes of the phenomena identified as a stereotype threat revealed during school activities. This phenomenon consists in obtaining lower achievements in specific areas, depending on belonging to a specific social group (being an object of stereotyping or not). In the school context, this refers to pupils achieving lower school results than their intellectual abilities could indicate compared to the opposite gender (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003; Steffens, Jelenec, & Noack, 2010). Girls get lower scores in science subjects while boys in humanities. The reasons for activating the stereotype threat can exist in both official educational content and in the hidden curriculum. School programs and textbooks, which abound in traditional approaches of femininity and masculinity and present a stereotypical division of social roles (Wołosik, 2009), may also enhance students' belief in the division of scientific disciplines characteristic of both genders. Then, subjects like mathematics or physics are associated with masculinity, while language abilities, with femininity. An additional factor that can build in students the belief about different intellectual options of girls and boys depending on the field are the behavior of teachers, different towards both genders (Serbin, O'Leary, Kent, & Tonick, 1973).

In order to accomplish the above-mentioned research goal, four complementary studies will be carried out in the project. (1) The first will concern the analysis of the content of school textbooks for mathematics and Polish language in terms of presenting femininity, masculinity and the division of social roles. As a result of this stage mathematical and linguistic tasks will be selected, on the basis of which a tool measuring the school skills in these areas will be created. This tool will be used in (2) the second stage of the study – the attempt to reveal the threat of stereotype depending on the content of the tasks being solved. During this stage, the level of students' intelligence, the level of creative thinking, the level of concentration of attention and self-efficacy in the area of mathematical and linguistic creativity will be also controlled. Control of the level of intelligence will allow to exclude lower school achievements conditioned by intellectual abilities. The analysis of student's level of creative thinking is dictated by the assumption of its inhibiting effect on stereotype threat. In the third (3) stage of the project, the observational study of the lessons will be carried out. During observation, the behavior of the teacher will be analyzed, which indicates different treatment of students depending on their gender. After completing the observations, teachers of mathematics and the Polish language will be invited to give interviews. The aim of the interviews will be to identify teachers' beliefs and awareness about the possibility of deepening gender stereotypes during school activities. Simultaneously with the third stage of the study, the fourth stage (4) will start, consisting of a diary study of a selected group of students. Four students from each observed class will daily complete a short questionnaire regarding their well-being and perception of school content and teacher behavior during the lesson. The study will last one month.

Undertaking the described research topic was dictated by the need to diagnose the problem of stereotype threat as early as possible. Stereotypical perception of the abilities and skills of girls and boys can be important both for their school functioning as well as for further development and choice of career path. Fear of confirming the stereotype in the long run causes the avoidance of activities in which the skills and abilities of people from stereotyped groups are perceived in a stereotypical way (Nelson, 2006), lack of interest in a specific area and as a result its abandonment (Woodcock, Hernandez, Estrada, & Schultz, 2012). Long-term effects may show up in lower school grades obtained by girls on science subjects, higher levels of intellectual helplessness (Bedyńska, 2013), lack of interest in exact sciences among girls (Anderson, Lankshear, Timms, & Courtney, 2008) and humanities among boys (Schmenk, 2004). Despite repeated attempts to show the scale of the threat, Polish teachers do not see the need to introduce specific actions in the area of equality education, arguing that the school has a sufficiently integrative character to strengthen attitudes free from prejudice (Abramowicz, 2011). In fact, often dead letter about respect, tolerance and dignity contained in the school statutes do not translate into practice in the school reality (Abramowicz, 2011).