



Interdisziplinäres Forschungskolloquium Gender Studies

Ironic effects of gender-status beliefs on rising female proportions in organizational fields: The example of nuns and monks in Roman-Catholic monasticism

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Mittwoch, 17. Mai 2017, 18:15–20:00

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Over the last decades, organizations have introduced several diversity practices to reduce (unconscious) status bias against minorities; mostly without success. In particular for gender, the increase of minority proportions is pushed as an alternative, faster solution. A theory of how exactly higher female proportions influence gender discrimination at work is nevertheless largely missing, and the interplay between proportions of underrepresented groups and status bias against minority groups is not considered. Against this backdrop, we enrich theories of in-group bias with the theory of status construction to explain when higher female proportions create more positive work environments for women. We argue that gender-related status beliefs might counteract the positive effects of balancing gender proportions. The main factor determining whether status beliefs are encouraged and used is sex categorization in local interactions. Sex categorization primes gender-related status beliefs, and, consequently an increase of female proportions will not lead to a reduction of female disadvantages. We test these assumptions with historical data on monasteries, which offer a unique, real-life setting for examining the effects of gender proportions and gender status beliefs.

Katja Rost is professor of sociology at the University of Zurich. She studied sociology and completed her PhD and Habilitation in management and organizational studies. Before moving to the University of Zurich Katja Rost was an assistant professor for organizational sociology at the University of Mannheim and a full professor for management at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena. Her research focuses on economic and organizational sociology.