

# Why corporatizing feminist messages doesn't really help women

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Companies promote conferences, self-help books, clubs and seminars as paths to empowerment or confidence, promising to unlock career success and acclaim. But selling individual empowerment won't bring about lasting social change, experts say.

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Changing that narrative means women need to question their own history of ingrained assumptions about women and girls, according to psychologist Valerie Purdie Greenaway, director for the Laboratory of Intergroup Relations and the Social Mind at Columbia University.

"It's the elephant in the room," Greenaway told attendees Tuesday at the "Embrace Ambition" Summit in New York. "Women have implicit biases, too."

She pointed to research on students' attitudes about their own academic performances. By a small margin, the women in the study ranked their performances lower than the men did. Most people would interpret the data to mean women are less confident than men. But, Greenaway said, they could reframe it as "women are realistic, and men are overconfident."

That kind of rethinking challenges the assumption that women are innately less confident, she says, and it disrupts the narrative promoted in media, business and beyond.