

Stereotype Threat Workshop

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Stroessner & Good, **Stereotype Threat: An overview**

Stereotype Threat

- 1) What is Stereotype Threat?
- 2) Who can be affected?
- 3) Academic consequences of threat
- 4) What situations lead to Stereotype Threat?
- 5) Mechanisms of Stereotype Threat
- 5) Prevention/reduction of Stereotype Threat

What is Stereotype Threat?

“Stereotype threat refers to being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s social group.”

(Steele & Aronson, 1995)

Who can be affected?

- Each of us is a member of at least one group that can be characterized by a negative stereotype
- Stereotype Threat can negatively impact anyone where the situational context invokes a stereotype-based expectation of poor performance
- Therefore anyone can be affected!

Academic Consequences?

1. Decreased academic performance on:

- ◆ Classroom exams
- ◆ Standardized tests
- ◆ Purportedly “culture free” tasks measuring cognitive ability

Academic Consequences?

2) Increased use of self-defeating strategies

a) Reduced practice/preparation time

b) Task discounting

i) Questioning validity of task, or

ii) Questioning importance of trait being tested

Stone, 2002 ; Keller, 2002; Steele and Aronson, 1995; Schimel, Arndt, Banko, & Cook, 2004; Lesko & Corpus, 2006; Klein, Pohl, & Ndagijimana, 2007.

Academic Consequences?

3) Disengagement and dis-identification

a) Disengagement

i) Individuals distance themselves from threat

ii) Individuals claim that task performance is unimportant to them

b) Dis-identification

i) Avoiding threat

ii) Detaching one's identity from domain

Academic Consequences?

4) Altered aspirations/professional identities

- Female undergraduates, in male-dominated disciplines, report higher levels sex-discrimination, and stereotype threat

i. More likely to consider changing major compared to female students in non male-dominated fields

- The more emphasis placed on importance of “male characteristics” within field, the less likely women are to express interest in that domain

What situations lead to Stereotype Threat?

1) Group identity status

- One's stereotyped group status is made situationally salient

e.g. providing demographic information at beginning of test

2) Solo or numerical minority status

- Situations where one is, or expects to be the only representative of stereotyped group

e.g., only woman taking math test in otherwise all-male class

What situations lead to Stereotype Threat?

3) Stereotype salience

- Stereotypes are invoked in performance environment

i) e.g., woman has to perform test for allegedly sexist instructor

ii) Task is described using explicit or implicit stereotypes

4) Evaluative scrutiny

- Task is described as providing information about one's ability in a stereotyped context

Reducing Stereotype Threat

Specific strategies:

- 1) Encourage students to think of themselves as complex, multi-faceted individuals
- 2) Emphasize social identities that are not linked to underperformance
- 3) Encourage self-affirmation
- 4) Emphasize high standards, and assure students they can meet these expectations

Reducing Stereotype Threat

Specific strategies:

5) Role models

6) Explain occurrences of anxiety and distraction that do not involve stereotypes

7) Emphasize effort/motivation, deemphasize notion of fixed talent

Blanton, Crocker, & Miller, 2000; Marx & Roman, 2002, Marx, Stapel, & Muller, 2005; Johns, Schmader, and Martens, 2005; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Dweck & Sorich, 1999; and Mueller & Dweck, 1998.