

STEREOTYPE THREAT

Stereotype threat “refers to being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group” (<http://www.reducingstereotypethreat.org/>).

Stereotype threat predicts that **if...**

- You care about success in a particular domain, and
- One of your identities is associated with a negative stereotype about success in that same domain, and
- Elements of the environment make that particular identity salient

...then:

- The cognitive energy spent worrying (however unconsciously) that you might fulfill the negative stereotype increases the likelihood that you will **underperform** in that very setting.

Counteracting stereotype threat through your teaching

Research shows that these **instructor strategies** can effectively combat achievement gaps in performance on tests and assignments:

- Refer to successful experts who are from groups who are underrepresented in the field.
- Emphasize that achievement on tests and assignments reflects effort and commitment, not intrinsic ability.
- Communicate high expectations and offer clear paths for everyone to meet them.
- Remind all students that success can involve struggle. Normalize and discuss frustrations or challenges and ways to overcome them.
- Provide a range of assignments and assessment opportunities, from low-stakes to higher-stakes.
- Advertise and promote support resources around campus to all students (e.g., Sweetland Center for Writing or the Science Learning Center).
- Build in opportunities for self-affirmation. Studies have shown that the effects of stereotype threat are reduced when students have spent some time writing or talking about their personal values, qualities, or skills.

Some Resources:

Reducing Stereotype Threat: <http://www.reducingstereotypethreat.org/>

Steele, Claude M. *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2010. Print.

U-M ecologist Meghan Duffy's blog:

<https://dynamicecology.wordpress.com/2014/04/29/countering-stereotype-threat/>