

STEREOTYPE THREAT



Steele, C. M. (1997) A threat in the air. How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American psychologist* 52(6), 613-629. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.52.6.613. Available from [Google Scholar](#).
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Spencer, S. J., Steele, C. M. and Quinn, D. M. (1999) *Stereotype Threat and Women's Math Performance*. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 35, 4-28. DOI: 10.1006/jesp.1998.1373. Available from [Google Scholar](#).
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Ambady, N., Shih, M., Kim, A. and Pittinsky, T. L. (2001) Stereotype susceptibility in children: effects of identity activation on quantitative performance. *Psychological Science* 12(5), 385-390. DOI: 10.1111/1467-9280.00371. Available from [Google Scholar](#).
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Stereotype susceptibility in children: effects of identity activation on quantitative performance

Abstract

A growing body of research indicates that the activation of negative stereotypes can impede cognitive performance in adults, whereas positive stereotypes can facilitate cognitive performance. In two studies, we examined the effects of positive and negative stereotypes on the cognitive performance of children in three age groups: lower elementary school, upper elementary school, and middle school. Very young children in the lower elementary grades (kindergarten-grade 2) and older children in the middle school grades (grades 6-8) showed shifts in performance associated with the activation of positive and negative stereotypes; these shifts were consistent with patterns previously reported for adults. The subtle activation of negative stereotypes significantly impeded performance, whereas the subtle activation of positive stereotypes significantly facilitated performance. Markedly different effects were found for children in the upper elementary grades (grades 3-5). These results suggest that the development of stereotype susceptibility is a critical domain for understanding the connection between stereotypes and individual behavior.

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A threat in the air. How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance

Abstract

A general theory of domain identification is used to describe achievement barriers still faced by women in advanced quantitative areas and by African Americans in school. The theory assumes that sustained school success requires identification with school and its subdomains; that societal pressures on these groups (e.g., economic disadvantage, gender roles) can frustrate this identification; and that in school domains where these groups are negatively stereotyped, those who have become domain identified face the further barrier of stereotype threat, the threat that others' judgments or their own actions will negatively stereotype them in the domain. Research shows that this threat dramatically depresses the standardized test performance of women and African Americans who are in the academic vanguard of their groups (offering a new interpretation of group differences in standardized test performance), that it causes disidentification with school, and that practices that reduce this threat can reduce these negative effects.

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Stereotype Threat and Women's Math Performance

Abstract

When women perform math, unlike men, they risk being judged by the negative stereotype that women have weaker math ability. We call this predicament *stereotype threat* and hypothesize that the apprehension it causes may disrupt women's math performance. In Study 1 we demonstrated that the pattern observed in the literature that women underperform on difficult (but not easy) math tests was observed among a highly selected sample of men and women. In Study 2 we demonstrated that this difference in performance could be eliminated when we lowered stereotype threat by describing the test as not producing gender differences. However, when the test was described as producing gender differences and stereotype threat was high, women performed substantially worse than equally qualified men did. A third experiment replicated this finding with a less highly selected population and explored the mediation of the effect. The implication that stereotype threat may underlie gender differences in advanced math performance, even those that have been attributed to genetically rooted sex differences, is discussed.

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