

STEREOTYPE THREAT

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PUZZLING OBSERVATIONS

- 62% of African-Americans do not finish college. (Whites, 41%)
- White women do better at math/science in elementary and middle school.
- But by college, women are 43% of the population, but only 22% of science degrees

SOCIAL STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS

- Innate intelligence or math genes
- Limited access to a good education
- Cultural constraints. For instance, cultural expectations about women and math

EVIDENCE AGAINST STRUCTURAL FACTORS

- Performance gaps for minorities exist across social classes.
- The “overprediction effect” on grades for minorities and on math for women

IF ONE IS GOING TO BE A MATHEMATICAN, WHAT IS NECESSARY?

- Identification with school success
- Doing well is part of one's identity
- One is self-evaluatively accountable
- Good feelings about self depend on doing well

TO MAKE THIS IDENTIFICATION, WHAT IS NECESSARY?

- I believe I have the interests and talents required
- I can be accepted and valued in that domain
- No insurmountable barriers exist to domain entry

STEREOTYPE THREAT

- Arises in a situation in which the stereotype is relevant.
- The situation strikes one as a test of stereotype-relevant qualities
- Arises for people who have made the relevant identifications--they care about doing well
- For them, the threat is to self identity

THE THREAT HAMPERS ACHIEVEMENT

- Short term. Performance concerns about the required test
- A sort of test anxiety, or arousal
- Long term. “Identity reorganization.”
- Our old friend. Preserving self esteem by eliminating an element from self concept.
- One ceases to have pretensions--James

THE THEORY STATED

- When a negative stereotype becomes salient as a criterion for test evaluation
- Individual group members become concerned about confirming the stereotype.
- Through various psychological mechanisms
- The concern can cause group members to perform more poorly
- Than they would performing in a neutral context

EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE

- Intelligence and African Americans
- Mathematical ability and women
- Mathematical ability and Asian-American women. (This awaits further validation.)

THE INTERESTING CASE OF THE WHITE MAN

- Interesting as was the low self esteem individual.
- Separates two points of view.
- Stereotypes, and stereotype threat are really about groups that are habitually stereotyped
- And white men are not habitually stereotyped.
- Or, for any group, there is a stereotype, and therefor a stereotype threat.

THE ATHLETICISM DOMAIN

- Blacks have natural athletic ability
- Whites do not. “White men can’t jump.”
- Whites in athletics have high sports intelligence, which compensates for lack of natural ability.

STEREOTYPE THREAT AMONG WHITE MALES

- The Michigan Athletic Aptitude Test
- Each step represented a more difficult task
- Could be labeled as either a test of “natural ability to perform complex tasks that require hand-eye coordination
- Or “the ability to think strategically during...”
- Natural ability threatens whites, thinking strategically threatens Blacks.

Christian Lynch's results

Natural Ability	Sports IQ	Race Prime	Control
23.10	27.20	27.30	22.10
Blacks			
27.80	23.30	22.90	24.60
whites			

CONCLUSIONS

- Stereotype threat is a useful concept
- Emphasizes the short term burden of the stereotype
- The identity disengagement idea has been less well tested, but seems valid
- Is a socially optimistic explanation for some witnessed lowered performance on tests
- Because it does not attribute them to long term defects.

WHAT REMAINS TO DO

- Figure out ways in which the stereotype threat burden can be lifted from test settings
- Figure out ways in which the stereotype threat burden can be lifted from educational settings
- Hints. The Michigan residential college program.
- Trust and $P=a X E$ rather than $P=A X e$