

## Introduction:

This activity is based on the chapter by Toni Schmader, William Hall, and Alyssa Croft, "Stereotype threat in intergroup relations" (see citation below). This activity will help participants recognize the mechanisms that cause negative impacts of stereotyping. This activity explores the ways to combat negative performance by identifying and removing stereotype threats. This activity and handout are especially beneficial to instructors and program leaders in addressing issues of academic performance among marginalized and minority students.

Participants should begin by listening to the 2010 NPR interview "Author: Stereotypes Shape Our Perceptions And Ourselves" with Columbia University Provost and social psychologist, Dr. Claude Steele, author of *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us*. (<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128082797>) (approximately 11 minutes)

### *Key takeaways from the audio interview*

"Stereotypes are habits of mind."

### Examples of effects of stereotype threat:

- Underperforming actual abilities because of stereotype threat.
- Worry about confirming or disproving a stereotype.
- This multitasking distraction impairs performance.

### Example of reducing stereotype threats:

- Directly acknowledge the stereotype with the test-takers.
- Suggest that it doesn't apply to this particular test or context.
- Suggest that stereotyped groups do better than average.

"... Students have to be able to trust that ... they're not going to be seen stereotypically."

## Facilitator notes:

Facilitators should be aware of the following risks while facilitating the activity:

Stereotype threat pressures for white/majority member participants: fear of being perceived as racist or racially insensitive, due to lack of confidence in their competence in conversations surrounding race.

Pressures for marginalized/minority member participants: feeling pressure to "speak for" the group(s) with which they identify; feeling uncomfortable discussing their personal experiences with stereotype threat.

## Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Define and identify stereotype threat, its sources, and effects
2. Recognize steps that can be taken to reduce stereotype threat
3. Begin to strategize ways in which they can reduce stereotype threat.

## Time:

11-minute audio recording assigned as homework/prep work.

35-50 minutes for activity.

## Group size:

Entire group/subgroups/individuals.

## Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Minimization
- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

### Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

### Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks:

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

### Other Skills:

Mentorship & Leadership; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

## Activity Instructions:

1. To prepare for the activity, have participants listen to:

2010 NPR interview “Author: Stereotypes Shape Our Perceptions and Ourselves” with Columbia University Provost and social psychologist, Dr. Claude Steele, author of *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us*.  
(<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128082797>)

2. Instruct participants to either individually, or in groups of 2-3, answer the questions on the handout.
3. Engage participants in a group discussion addressing each of the questions on the handout.
  - How do you define “stereotype threat?”
  - What causes of stereotype threat surprised/interested you?
  - What are some situations you encounter that may cause stereotype threat?
  - Identify two methods for reducing and/or avoiding stereotype threat and provide a detailed intervention that addresses one of the causes.

## Related Tools:

- [Responding to Stereotypes About You](#)