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Sym2PaperB2: Stereotype threat, ethnicity, and gender: An American perspective

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Biography

David Stevens is a doctoral student in the Social Research Methodologies cluster at the UC Berkeley School of Education. His research interests centre on the development of alternative models for educational data analysis and their practical applications including informing instructional practices; program evaluation; school funding and resource allocation; and targeted student interventions.

His work is informed by his years as a high school science, math and Special Education teacher as well as time doing research, evaluation, and assessment at the district office level. David is driven by the belief that in the right setting, and with sufficient support, every student can be successful.

ABSTRACT

In the United States, history, culture, and politics have privileged some groups over others, most prominently along ethnic-racial and gendered lines. The cumulative effects of prioritizing some groups over others have resulted in gaps in achievement between those with full access and those without. These gaps, detached from the context of history, have contributed to stereotypes where group membership is associated with ability and achievement. Under both laboratory and real-world conditions, making conscious the negative stereotypes about an individual's group membership has been shown to depress performance. This phenomenon, termed stereotype threat, has been observed over a wide range of settings and outcomes and is frequently invoked as a major contributor to the achievement gaps in the United States. A full understanding of stereotype threat in the US requires an understanding of the antecedents that both created and sustain it. We begin with a review of the historical, political, and cultural origins of ethnic-racial and gender stereotypes and how they contribute to the modern perpetuation of gaps in both opportunity and achievement. We then summarize the literature on stereotype threat in American students and situate it within the diversity that characterizes the U.S. student population. We finish with a review of several significant interventions that combine simplicity, low cost, and ease of implementation to not only counter the effects of stereotype threat, but also to help maximize students' performance.