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# Sym2PaperA2: Stereotype threat research in real-world gendered contexts: Looking to the future

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**Biography**

*Penelope Watson is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland's Faculty of Education and Social Work.  Her research interests are gender, gender stereotypes and identity, gendered beliefs and expectations, and gender stereotype threat.  She contributes as a researcher to several projects exploring, for example, the influence of gendered teacher expectations of academic achievement on male and female students, and the relationship of adolescent gender self-concept with school belonging, ethnic identity, and stress and coping at school, and the association of self-beliefs, gender, and vocational aspirations for young people.*

## ABSTRACT

Stereotype threat has compromised performance and restricted engagement in several academic domains including those that are gendered masculine or feminine.  Stereotype threat is distinguished from other identity threats by the concern that one's performance in a particular performance domain will confirm or be judged against cultural stereotypes purporting inferiority in that domain.  The aspect of one's social identity to which a threatening stereotype is directed will be rendered dominant, and in this case concerns generated by that threat will overwhelm the individual (Steele, 2003).  As gender is a social identity, threatening stereotypes alluding to inferior ability in domains gender-typed as appropriate for the opposite gender have the power to compromise performance, a sense of belonging, and engagement in that domain.

Gender-based stereotype threat has uniquely occurred where participation in a particular gender-typed domain was considered incongruent with one's own gender.  Interventions to alleviate the effects of stereotype threat in gendered contexts have often yielded inconclusive, and contradictory results, and been described as artificially contrived, temporary, and contextual.  Further, the need for a deeper understanding of situation-specific cues of stereotype threat, and critique that the construct can no longer be studied in isolation to other psychosocial disciplines have offered impetus for further study.  As stereotype threat research moves to further explore interpersonal (as compared to intrapersonal) processes an understanding of the beliefs, and theory associated with cues that trigger threatening gender stereotypes, is urgently needed as a precursor to the more effective provision of identity safety.  An overview of stereotype threat in gendered contexts, and suggestions of future research paths toward reducing gender-based stereotype threat are presented.