

Improving intergroup attitudes and reducing stereotype threat:

An integrated model

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Outline

In this chapter we will present a theoretical integration of research on improving intergroup attitudes and reducing stereotype threat. Research on improving intergroup attitudes has focused on developing interventions to reduce prejudice, discrimination and conflict between groups. Research on reducing stereotype threat has focused on reducing the detrimental impact of negative self-stereotypes on performance and self-efficacy. Drawing on intergroup contact and categorization theories we will outline an integrated model of stereotype change for both ingroup and outgroup attitudes, with a particular focus on stereotype threat phenomena.

We will begin by providing a review of current theory and research on stereotype threat, and in particular, on *reducing* stereotype threat. Stereotype threat refers to the performance detriment that is observed when a negative self-stereotype is made salient in a relevant testing situation (Steele, 1997; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). The effect has been observed in a range of domains. These include the depressed math performance of female students when they have been compared with male students (compared to when they have not; see Schmader, 2002; Spencer, Steele & Quinn, 1999; Marx & Roman, 2002); Caucasian students of low socio-economic status compared to students from high socio-economic backgrounds (Croizet & Claire, 1998); the performance of elderly participants on

memory tasks when compared with younger counterparts (Levy, 1996); and the athletic performance of white participants when compared to black participants (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling & Darley, 1999).

Recently researchers have developed a number of ways to challenge negative self-stereotypes, and consequently, reduce stereotype threat. Ambady et al. (2004) found that women instructed to think about their individual attributes (versus group membership) significantly outperformed women primed with the gender stereotype alone. Johns, Schmader and Martens (2005) found that educating women *about* stereotype threat enhanced their math performance. Good, Aronson and Inzlicht (2003) found that promoting the idea that intelligence is malleable, and that academic difficulties can be sometimes attributed to situational factors, rather than dispositional factors, was also effective for black students. Other techniques include rendering the activated stereotype irrelevant to the testing situation (Steele, 1997), exposure to positive role models (Marx & Roman, 2002), and conducting the test in same sex environments (Inzlicht & Ben Zeev, 2000).

Research on reducing stereotype threat has employed the sort of stereotype disconfirming approaches outlined above but less attention has been paid to the extensive literature on improving intergroup relations, a literature that provides a number of strategies for encouraging more positive perceptions of *outgroups*. We will argue that there are important theoretical and applied benefits of integrating research in these hitherto distinct domains.

Research on reducing prejudice has focused on the benefits of contact and developing a common ingroup identity. Here we will consider three related theories: Intergroup Contact Theory (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Brown & Hewstone, 2007; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1993), and Multiple Categorization (Crisp & Hewstone, *in press*, 2006). We will argue that an important common link between all of these approaches is the idea that, albeit via different methods, emphasizing common ground between groups and group members can challenge existing stereotypic beliefs.

We will then discuss points of convergence and divergence between what we will label content-centered (e.g., stereotype disconfirming) and structure-centered (contact and categorization) approaches to improving attitudes and expectations. We will illustrate how typically the former have been applied to the stereotype threat domain, while the latter have been applied to the intergroup relations domain. From this we will develop our integrated model and review supportive findings. We will focus on particularly our own research that has adapted and applied contact and categorization interventions to stereotype threat contexts. This research has shown with both gender stereotypes (female-mathematics; Crisp & Bache, 2007; Hall & Crisp, 2007; Rosenthal & Crisp, 2005; *in press*; Rosenthal, Crisp & Suen, *in press*) and age stereotypes (elderly-cognitive functioning; Abrams, Eller, & Bryant, 2006) that detriments in quantitative test performance caused by negative intergroup comparisons can be avoided or even reversed following the application of strategies developed in the intergroup relations domain. An important part of this model will be the integration of social identity theorizing in the literature on stereotype threat (e.g., Schamder, 2002) with that on intergroup relations (Crisp, 2006; Crisp, Hall, & Suen, 2007; Crisp & Beck, 2005; Crisp, Stone, & Hall, 2006), as well as illustrating how new developments in the contact literature (Eller & Abrams, 2003; 2004; Turner, Crisp & Lambert, *in press*) could provide a better understanding of how to tackle stereotype threat.

Our model will detail the impact of contact on category boundaries and the corresponding consequences for self, ingroup, and outgroup attitudes. We will argue that a theoretical emphasis on challenging psychologically represented intergroup differences can not only change negative outgroup stereotypes, but also, through mechanisms linked to contact and category differentiation, reduce negative self-stereotyping. Our model will provide timely synthesis of research that will illustrate the benefits of intergroup contact for both psychological well-being and intergroup relations.

We will end by discussing the implications, applications and future research questions that arise from the proposed model.

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