Contending With Stereotype Threat at Work: A Model of Long-Term Responses Ψ

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Abstract

Women and people of color are still underrepresented in many occupational roles. Being in a situation where one is underrepresented, and thus in the demographic minority, has been shown to be a factor leading to the experience of stereotype threat—the expectation that one will be judged or perceived on the basis of social identity group membership rather than actual performance and potential. Although numerous laboratory studies have documented the negative impact of stereotype threat on short-term task performance, its effects in applied contexts, such as work settings, remain unexplored. Utilizing theories from the social, organizational, and counseling psychology literatures, the authors propose a conceptual model of long-term responses to stereotype threat in the workplace. The authors posit a framework of possible responses to stereotype threat that include fending off the stereotype, discouraged by the stereotype, and resilient to the stereotype. Within each response set, there are numerous strategies that an individual can employ, with varying benefits and consequences. The authors conclude the

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article by suggesting an agenda for future research and discussing the implications of the model for understanding stereotype threat in the workplace.

Keywords

stereotype threat, race, gender, workplace discrimination

Although there has been significant progress in recent years in the diversification of occupations, women and people of color are still underrepresented in many fields. For example, women earn 30% of PhDs in the sciences yet hold only 13% of full professor positions (National Science Foundation, 2008). The same is true for African Americans, who represent 11% of the workforce but only 6.3% of managers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Yet little is known of the experiences of people who are in the demographic minority in their occupational roles. One common experience is likely to be stereotype threat—the expectation that one will be judged on the basis of social identity group membership rather than actual performance and potential (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). Being in a situation where one is in the demographic minority has been shown to be a factor leading to the experience of stereotype threat (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000; Roberson, Deitch, Brief, & Block, 2003; Sekaquaptewa, Waldman, & Thompson, 2007). Although numerous laboratory studies of stereotype threat exist, its effects in work settings remain unexplored. The purpose of this article is to present a model of responses to stereotype threat in work contexts to understand the experience of being in the demographic minority in the workplace. This model extends existing work in counseling psychology on the impact of bias, discrimination, and microaggressions (e.g., Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008) on the experience of individuals in the demographic minority, by addressing a different type of threat that is also pervasive in the workplace. Our model integrates literature from social psychology on the effects of stereotype threat on task performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995), from counseling psychology about how people cope with having attainment of important goals blocked (Klinger, 1977), and from social identity theory on how people respond to identity threats (Roberts, 2005).

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat occurs in a situation where there is an expectation that one may be judged on the basis of social group membership and there is a negative stereotype about one's social identity group (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). There has been a great deal of research demonstrating the negative consequences of being in a situation where one is likely to encounter stereotype threat. In fact, there are more than 300 published studies in peer-reviewed

journals on stereotype threat. Stereotype threat has resulted in decreased performance for women students on math tests (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999), African Americans on standardized tests (Steele & Aronson, 1995), Hispanics on standardized tests (Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002), low SES students on standardized tests (Croizet & Claire, 1998), and women MBA students on negotiation tasks (Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002). These accumulated findings establish that an individual's performance can be harmed by the awareness that he or she may be judged on the basis of negative stereotypes. This has been found to be the case regardless of whether the individual believes the stereotype is true and regardless of the accuracy of the stereotype.

Stereotype threat has been found to occur when the following conditions are met: (a) the task an individual is performing is relevant to the stereotype about an individual's group, (b) the task is challenging, (c) the individual is performing in a domain with which he or she identifies, and (d) the context in which the task is being performed is likely to reinforce the stereotype. Quite likely, women and people of color in the demographic minority at work experience stereotype threat, as these conditions typically pervade their work environments (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). For example, there are many performance-related stereotypes that are relevant at work (e.g., women are not good at quantitative tasks, African Americans are not good at cognitive ability tasks). Research has further demonstrated that women, African Americans and Hispanics are seen as deficient in attributes critical to leadership success, when compared with men and Whites (Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Tomkiewicz, Brenner, & Adeyemi-Bello, 1998). In addition, the context of the workplace is likely to reinforce stereotype threat since in many occupations women and people of color are in the demographic minority. Token or minority representation increases the salience of negative stereotypes about these groups and promotes greater stereotyping (Ely, 1995). Not surprisingly, studies have shown that in the workplace being in the demographic minority invokes stronger perceptions of stereotype threat (Roberson et al., 2003).

Although the negative impact of stereotype threat on performance has been clearly documented, the mechanisms by which stereotype threat influence performance are less clear. It seems that stereotype threat negatively affects performance due to a combination of factors including heightened physiological arousal (Blascovich, Spencer, Quinn, & Steele, 2001; Osborne, 2006, 2007), reduced working memory capacity (Croizet, Depres, Gauzins, Huguet, Levens & Meot, 2004; Schmader & Johns, 2003), impaired self-regulation (Cadinu, Maass, Rosabianca, & Kiesner, 2005; Inzlicht,

McKay, & Aronson, 2006), and lowered performance expectations (Cadinu, Maass, Frigerio, Impagliazzo, & Latinotti, 2003; Stangor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998). Thus, when an individual encounters a situation where there is a negative stereotype about his or her group, that individual will experience heightened arousal, resulting in fewer cognitive resources available for performing the task. These cognitive resources are tied up in self-regulatory thoughts such as task-related worry and negative thoughts about one's own performance. This can result in a cycle of lowered performance and lowered expectations for performance in this domain.

The stereotype threat literature in social psychology has clearly demonstrated the negative impact that stereotype threat can have on task performance. However, our understanding of the range of potential responses to stereotype threat is limited. In fact, researchers have concluded that "dependent measures used in stereotype threat research have been narrow in scope" and that "academic performance may be neither the most important consequence of stereotype threat nor the most effective measure for inferring its existence" (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007, pp. 110, 111).

There has been some limited research examining other outcomes of stereotype threat, which has yielded contradictory results. Stereotype threat has been found to lead to a variety of reactions including disengagement and disidentification from the domain in which the threat is experienced (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999; von Hippel et al., 2005), disidentification from the group that is stereotyped (Pronin, Steele, & Ross, 2004; Steele & Aronson, 1995), self-handicapping strategies that allow individuals to make external attributions for their performance (Keller, 2002; Stone, 2002), and reactance, where individuals work harder in response to stereotype threat (Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004). Although these reactions have been associated with stereotype threat, there is little understanding about when and under what conditions they will occur.

In addition, the vast majority of these studies are laboratory experiments that use short-term academic tasks or tests with college populations. Although there is compelling evidence for the immediate effect of stereotype threat (performance decline), there are limits on what is known about the long-term effects of stereotype threat. How are people likely to respond to stereotype threat in a work setting where exposure to the threat occurs over time? Unlike the laboratory, the work setting places few constraints on behavior, thus there is likely to be a wide range of responses to stereotype threat. Yet as noted by Shapiro and Neuberg (2007), "There has been relatively little explicit exploration of the coping and compensatory strategies individuals spontaneously employ in response to experiences of stereotype threat" (p. 121). We need to
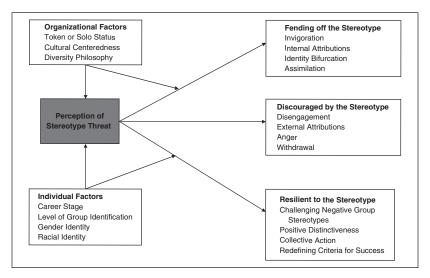
Organizational Factors
Token or Solo Status
Cultural Centeredness
Diversity Philosophy

Perception of
Stereotype Threat

Individual Factors
Career Stage
Level of Group Identification
Gender Identity
Racial Identity

Fending off the Stereotype
Invigoration
Internal Attributions
Identity Bifurcation
Assimilation

Discouraged by the Stereotype
Disengagement
External Attributions
Anger
Withdrawal

Resilient to the Stereotype
Challenging Negative Group
    Stereotypes
Positive Distinctiveness
Collective Action
Redefining Criteria for Success

Figure 1. Responses to perceived stereotype threat at work

know more about the variety of responses and strategies and how people utilize them. We also need to know more about when and under what conditions these various reactions to stereotype threat will occur.

To understand the responses people may have in a situation of long-term stereotype threat, we turn to Klinger's (1977) incentive-disengagement model, which outlines a cycle of responses individuals have when attainment of important goal is blocked. In using this model we assume that people have an implicit goal of being perceived and judged on the basis of their own performance and potential and not on the basis of stereotypes about their social identity group. Thus, experiencing stereotype threat blocks the goal of being accurately perceived and judged. Klinger's (1977) model suggests several stages of reactions to having an important goal blocked, including invigoration, aggression, depression, and recovery. We adapt this model to posit a framework of possible responses as individuals encounter stereotype threat in the workplace (see Figure 1). Although Klinger's (1977) model is a stage model, we believe that individuals' responses to stereotype threat will be influenced by both individual factors, such as level of identification with their group, as well as organizational factors, such as the salience of group membership in their organization or profession. Our model posits a framework for understanding responses to stereotype threat, including fending off the stereotype, discouraged by the stereotype, and resilient to the

stereotype. Within each response set, there are numerous strategies that an individual can employ, with varying benefits and consequences.

Fending Off the Stereotype

In Klinger's (1977) model, the first reaction to goal blockage involves increasing effort to overcome the perceived obstacle. Lab studies of stereotype threat have found that individuals may increase their effort on a task after experiencing stereotype threat (Kray et al., 2004; Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001; Oswald & Harvey, 2000). We have labeled this response *fending off the stereotype*. Individuals in this phase work vigorously to demonstrate that the stereotype does not apply to them. They may use work strategies, such as striving to perform at a high level, to appear perfect and demonstrate a "bulletproof" image (Bell & Nkomo, 2003). We suggest that this may result in high levels of productivity, but with a correspondingly high psychic cost. In trying to show that the stereotype does not apply to them, they also try to show that they are not a typical member of their social identity group. Feeling that they should keep aspects of themselves hidden, they will engage in counterstereotypic behaviors and distance themselves from other members of their social identity group. We now present specific responses and strategies that individuals may employ when fending off the stereotype.

Invigoration. Invigoration occurs when individuals respond to stereotype threat by overcompensating and working harder to meet their goals (Allport, 1954; Klinger, 1975, 1977; Miller & Myers, 1998). Evidence for this strategy has been found in laboratory research. Oswald and Harvey (2000) showed that female math students exposed to derogatory cartoons about women's math skills displayed increased motivation and performed better on a math test compared to students who were exposed to the cartoon but subsequently had the stereotype threat neutralized (by being provided with information that men and women performed equally well on the math test). They speculated that the students who experienced stereotype threat reacted against the inflammatory cartoon and increased their effort on the math test to disprove the negative stereotype that women are bad at math. Kray et al. (2001) and Kray et al. (2004) found that when a stereotype threat is particularly strong, the stigmatized group might be motivated to work harder and increase the quality of their performance. Field research also suggests that individuals may strive harder to counter negative stereotypes about their identity group. Bell and Nkomo (2003) found increases in effort among Black executives. One Black female executive who they interviewed in their research stated, "Black women need to do work that is sterling—not good work, but sterling

work—on a consistent basis. Because I was Black and female I always felt like there was a judge out there" (p. 145). Bell and Nkomo reasoned that Black female executives felt the need to work hard and perform exceptionally to counteract the perception that they were incompetent. Portraying a bullet-proof image seems to be one strategy used to deflect negative stereotypes associated with one's identity group.

Internal attributions. Although invigoration can lead to high levels of performance, in a work environment people are often faced with falling short of their goals. Fending off the stereotype is often accompanied by internal attributions for failure to achieve one's goals. Research has found that members of stigmatized groups, including women and ethnic minorities, prefer to attribute negative outcomes to their own personal inadequacies rather than discrimination (Ruggiero & Taylor, 1995, 1997). In Ruggiero and Taylor's (1995) lab study, women attributed their failure on a test, which was evaluated by a male judge, to their own performance when the probability of discrimination was ambiguous. They attributed their failure to discrimination only when they were told that 100% of male judges discriminated against women. Ruggiero and Taylor (1997) also found that women, Asians, and Blacks preferred to minimize the role of discrimination and instead to attribute failure to their own inadequacies. The authors theorized that internal attributions might serve as a self-protective measure. If negative outcomes are attributed to prejudice or stereotypes, individuals may feel helpless in the face of discrimination, which is perceived as pervasive and uncontrollable (Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997). It may be easier to blame oneself and retain a semblance of control over performance (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997). We posit that a sense of control underlies the "fending off" response. It reflects the belief that goals can be achieved through one's actions, thereby demonstrating that a negative stereotype about one's social identity group does not apply to oneself. Furthermore, it is possible that this response also stems from the belief that a negative stereotype is untrue for all members of one's social identity group.

Identity bifurcation. Another cognitive reaction associated with fending off the stereotype is identity bifurcation. Identity bifurcation occurs when individuals psychologically distance themselves from their negatively stereotyped group. For example, Pronin et al. (2004) found that women who had taken a high number of math classes were more likely to disassociate from "feminine characteristics" (e.g., flirtatious, planning to have children) that were strongly associated with the stereotype that women are bad at math compared to women who had taken fewer math courses. Interestingly, the women who distanced themselves from their femininity still identified with feminine

aspects (e.g., warm, nurturing) that were not associated with the negative stereotype of being bad at math. The study also demonstrated that women math majors who were exposed to stereotype threat described themselves as having fewer feminine characteristics (e.g., flirtatious, emotional) that were relevant to the stereotype that women are not good at math than women who were not exposed to stereotyped threat. Thus, being exposed to stereotype threat may lead to a "bifurcation" of identity, involving the rejection of aspects of one's identity that are seen as unacceptable in a given domain while remaining identified with other aspects that are unproblematic (Pronin et al., 2004; Steele et al., 2002). Identity bifurcation may help individuals to distance themselves from negative stereotypes associated with their group.

Assimilation. Another way of fending off the stereotype is to try to assume the characteristics of a more positively regarded social group (Padilla, 2008). Assimilation refers to the process of trying to attain a more desired social identity by distancing oneself from members of one's negatively stereotyped group and adopting the characteristics of members of a more highly regarded identity group (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Roberts, 2005; Thomas, 1993). Attempts to assimilate can be physical or cultural and social (Padilla, 2008). For example, members of ethnic minority groups may try to pass as members of a more privileged group by camouflaging their ethnicity and capitalizing on physical traits they share with the privileged group (e.g., light skin color; Breakwell, 1986). Social and cultural integration may involve adopting the language, customs, and attitudes of the positively regarded identity group (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Padilla, 2008). Ely (1995) reported that female attorneys in male-dominated firms take up masculine characteristics to conform to their firm's culture. Anderson's (1999) study of African American executives found that they adapted their behavior to try to assimilate with the dominant ethnic group in their organizations. An African American vice president stated,

> The thing is that once you [African Americans] get on that management track, either you change right away and start wearing different suits and different clothing or you never rise any higher. They're never going to envision you as being a White male, but if you can dress the same and look a certain way and drive a conservative car and whatever else, they'll say, this guy has a similar attitude, similar values. If you don't dress with the uniform, obviously you're on the wrong team. . . . It's a choice. (p. 17)

Similarly, Thomas (1993) found that some African American professionals may emulate the attitudes of their White managers to facilitate acceptance. Adopting the characteristics of a higher status identity group may raise an individual's self-esteem and deflect some of the negative perceptions that come from belonging to a negatively stereotyped identity group (Major, Quinton, McCoy, & Schmader, 2000; Tajfel, 1978).

Effectiveness of the fending off the stereotype response. The fending off the stereotype strategies can be utilized for a long time, as they may seem successful. Lab studies of stereotype threat have found that invigoration can lead to increased performance (Kray et al., 2001; Kray et al., 2004; Oswald & Harvey, 2000). In fact, many individuals experience positive work outcomes and advance in their field using this strategy (Bell & Nkomo, 2003). In addition, internal attributions may enable individuals to maintain a sense of control over their performance and shield them from the pervasiveness of discrimination (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997). Identity bifurcation and assimilation may help individuals to deflect negative stereotypes associated with their group and protect their self-esteem (Ellemers et al., 2002; Pronin et al., 2004; Roberts, 2005; Thomas, 1993).

However, research suggests that fending off the stereotype can also have negative consequences. For example, lab studies have found that invigoration can sometimes result in decreased performance. Steele and Aronson (1995) showed that when African American students increased their effort on a test in response to stereotype threat, they suffered a decline in their performance. They reasoned that when the task is difficult and complex, more effort does not always translate into better performance. In addition, expending a high level of effort over a long period without achieving success is associated with poor health. For example, engaging in "John Henryism," a coping strategy characterized by being extremely driven and goal oriented, has been related to hypertension among African American men (James, LaCroix, Kleinbaum, & Strogatz, 1984).

Internal attributions may also have negative consequences over time. Although individuals retain the belief that they have control over outcomes at work, they may become discouraged and depressed if they are unable to meet their goals. Repeatedly attributing negative outcomes to personal failure may ultimately result in lower self-esteem (Kernis, Brockner, & Frankel, 1989; Kuiper, 1978). Similarly, identity bifurcation and assimilation can be detrimental psychologically. Both strategies require that individuals hide aspects of themselves to demonstrate that they are not "typical" members of their social identity group. Rejecting their social identity group may be stressful

and difficult to maintain. Thus, although fending off the stereotype may be a successful strategy over the short term, it may be an unsustainable strategy over the long term. In addition, if individuals fending off the stereotype fail to achieve their goals, they may become discouraged.

Discouraged by the Stereotype

Even with all the physical, mental, and emotional effort expended in fending off the stereotype, individuals will still encounter situations where they are judged and evaluated based on the stereotype. In Klinger's (1977) model, the next two reactions to goal blockage after increasing effort to overcome the perceived obstacle are aggression and depression. We have combined these stages and labeled this response set *discouraged by the stereotype*. Individuals who respond to stereotype threat with discouragement realize that no matter how productive they are, and how much they achieve, they will still be perceived in light of this stereotype—not in every situation, but unpredictably. Anger is a typical emotional response in this stage. The anger felt at this stage cannot always be expressed directly because it is not socially acceptable to do so in work settings (Glomb & Hulin, 1997). This can lead to displaced anger toward oneself for not doing better and toward others, for example, family, friends, and coworkers (Gibson & Tulgan, 2002). These emotional reactions may further lead to psychological and behavioral job withdrawal. We now turn to the specific responses and strategies that individuals may use when discouraged by the stereotype.

Disengagement. One strategy that may be used by individuals who are discouraged by the existence of stereotype threat is to psychologically disengage their self-esteem from domains in which performance evaluations occur (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Major & Schmader, 1998; Major, Spencer, Schmader, Wolfe, & Crocker, 1998; Nussbaum & Steele, 2007; Steele et al., 2002). Disengagement involves weakening the dependence of one's self views and the views of one's skills and abilities from one's performance in a domain so that feelings of self-worth are not dependent on either successes or failures in the domain (Steele et al., 2002). There are two distinct psychological processes that produce a disengagement of self-esteem in performance-oriented domains: devaluing and discounting (Major & Schmader, 1998; Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001). Devaluation is a process in which outcomes received in the domain are no longer considered relevant to how the individual defines himself or herself, thus making the individual's self-evaluations protected against negative feedback. Conversely, discounting is the process of rejecting performance feedback in that the validity of an evaluation of one's ability or performance is dismissed. Research findings

demonstrate that when faced with a racially biased test that risked confirming a negative stereotype about their group, Black participants' self-esteem was not affected by negative feedback because of their psychologically disengaging their self-concept from their performance (Major et al., 1998).

Major and Schmader (1998) note that although disengagement can be an effective coping strategy that allows stigmatized individuals to protect themselves from social identity threats by keeping their self-esteem intact, it may have a negative impact on motivation over an extended period of time. However, Nussbaum and Steele (2007) showed that when individuals temporarily disengage their sense of self from evaluation, they can facilitate persistence and motivation toward a task, suggesting that situational disengagement allows individuals to persist despite the identity threat. Still, the authors note that continually using disengagement as a strategy to cope with stereotype threat could lead to chronic disengagement, negatively affecting motivation. We postulate that employees in work settings who experience stereotype threat may cope by disengaging their view of themselves and of their abilities from their work performance. Research by Roberson et al. (2003) suggests that disengagement occurs in work settings, as African American managers who experienced stereotype threat were likely to discount the performance feedback of their supervisors.

External attributions. When individuals are discouraged by stereotype threat, which they cannot fend off, it is proposed that they will be more likely to shift from making internal attributions to external attributions when they encounter difficulty in achieving their goals. Although there are numerous attributions that one could make in response to negative outcomes or feedback (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002), when employees believe they will be evaluated based on a stereotype about their group, external attributions of prejudice can be made. Crocker and Major (1989) maintain that attributing negative outcomes to the external causes of prejudice and/or discrimination as opposed to making attributions to internal causes (e.g., ability) protects self-esteem. By making external attributions of prejudice for negative events, self-esteem is protected since negative outcomes are not considered to be a reflection of personal abilities but rather from external causes outside of one's control. Ruggiero and Taylor (1997) found that when stigmatized groups perceived discrimination as a reason for failure, these individuals protected their performance-based self-esteem. However, the researchers also found that when minority group members attributed their failure to discrimination, this resulted in lower levels of social-based self-esteem. The authors note that stigmatized group members who make external attributions of discrimination may be more likely to hold positive perceptions of their performance but are more likely to have negative perceptions of self-esteem in the social domain

because of the understanding that that they were socially rejected based on their social identity group membership.

Anger. An affective response that we propose occurs as a result of the discouragement an individual experiences from contending with stereotype threat in work settings over an extended period of time is anger. Research has shown that the primary emotion elicited from being the target of discrimination and prejudice is anger (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). In a lab study where female participants were given negative feedback on a creativity task and were led to believe their failure on the task was because of gender discrimination, anger was the predominant emotion reported following the discriminatory incident (Matheson & Anisman, 2009). Additional research suggests that experiencing social discrimination influences not only anger directed toward the discriminator but also anger at oneself (Hansen & Sassenberg, 2006). Spector (1997) states that an employee can become frustrated at himself or herself for not achieving his or her workplace goals because of factors in the organizational environment (e.g., stereotype threat perceptions), which can result in anger. Gibson and Tulgan (2002) further support the view that managers are susceptible to experiencing self-directed anger for not being able to complete workplace goals, regardless of whether the blockage of goals is from individual or environmental factors in the organization.

The results of anger are not just emotional. Clark et al. (1999) proposed that, over time, anger in response to discrimination would negatively influence health outcomes including well-being. Moreover, Spector (1998) theorized that perceived stressors in the organizational environment (e.g., stereotype threat) lead to negative emotional reactions such as anger, which then lead to physiological (e.g., increased blood pressure and lower immune suppression) and psychological (e.g., job dissatisfaction) job strains.

Withdrawal. Another common reaction associated with the discouragement an individual can feel because of stereotype threat is psychological or behavioral withdrawal from the workplace. Psychological withdrawal reflects holding negative attitudes toward one's job or organization and includes a decreased level of involvement, commitment, and satisfaction with the job or organization. Conversely, behavioral job withdrawal is "a set of behaviors individuals enact to avoid the work situation; they are those behaviors designed to avoid participation in dissatisfying work situations" (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990, p. 63). Examples of job withdrawal behaviors include tardiness, absences, and turnover. Researchers have argued that people of

color and women are more likely than their White male counterparts to withdraw and turnover from the workplace based on both the discomfort they experience because of their token status and the discrimination they experience in the workplace (Riordan, Schaffer, & Stewart, 2005; Roberson, 2004). Indeed, research supports the view that perceived discrimination is negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson, 2001). Sagie, Birati, and Tziner (2002) note that psychological withdrawal is a precursor to behavioral withdrawal. In a turnover study of more than 475,000 managers in 20 organizations, Hom, Roberson, and Ellis (2008) showed that female managers were more likely to quit than male managers whereas African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans quit more than White Americans, though racial differences disappeared after tenure was controlled. This suggests that women and people of color may be more likely to engage in psychological and behavioral withdrawal because of having to contend with stereotype threat in the workplace.

Effectiveness of the discouraged by the stereotype response. There are many consequences for individuals who engage in these strategies when contending with stereotype threat. When utilized, these strategies can protect the individuals' self-esteem in the short term by allowing individuals to psychologically disengage their self-esteem from the domain or to make external attributions for their performance (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major et al., 1998). However, over an extended period of time, utilizing these strategies as a response to stereotype threat at work can negatively influence motivation as employees may come to believe that their level of performance is outside of their control (Crocker & Major, 1989; Nussbaum & Steele, 2007). Performance feedback from managers and peers may also be ignored, which can result in advancement and developmental opportunities being denied to the employee. Furthermore, the experience of stereotype threat may lead employees to hold negative job attitudes in the workplace, may lead them to reduce their desire to advance in the organization, and may lead to them quitting the organization altogether. Moreover, the literature suggests that the anger one experiences under discouragement may lead to poorer health outcomes over time (Clark et al., 1999; Spector, 1998). In summary, although the strategies employed by the individual who is discouraged by the stereotype may protect the individual's self-esteem in the short term, the strategies can result in negative consequences for the employee including decreased motivation levels, negative job attitudes, complete withdrawal from the organization, and unfavorable health outcomes.

Resilient to the Stereotype

Although the responses to stereotype threat outlined thus far seem pessimistic, many people in the demographic minority remain engaged in their work and are satisfied with their careers. Klinger's (1977) incentive-disengagement model proposes a final stage, recovery, in which disappointments are no longer as relevant, interest in other incentives is recovered, and behavior is redirected toward another goal. Building on this, we propose a set of responses to stereotype threat that are reflective of being *resilient to the stereotype*, which involves not only the capacity to recover after sustaining a loss but also the ability to "bounce back" beyond the initial setback, fostering further development (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Individuals who respond to stereotype threat with resilience strategies realize that stereotype threat will be present and will affect how others judge them. Therefore, they redirect their energy toward the goal of changing the context of their work environment, with the incentive that it will be more inclusive for members of their identity group. Individuals who respond to stereotype threat with resilience are likely to employ group-focused coping strategies, such as trying to improve the treatment of their group (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998). It is of note that less research that has been conducted on the resilience strategies than either the fending off the stereotype or the discouraged by the stereotype strategies. We, therefore, rely on theory from social identity (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Roberts, 2005) to infer specific resilience strategies.

Challenging negative group stereotypes. Recognizing the limitations of how negative stereotypes characterize one's social identity group may lead one to challenge those stereotypes through educating others (Roberts, 2005). One strategy for changing the work context so that it is more inclusive for others who share one's identity is to educate members of the dominant group about the stereotypes that they hold and the impact of these stereotypes on behavior. Individuals who experience stereotype threat may respond by directly challenging the negative stereotype through their interactions with others. For instance, when a woman scientist was faced with a stereotype her response was to directly confront it. The encounter occurred after the scientist learned that other women scientists felt marginalized and unsupported at an annual meeting for scientists in her field.

> I've approached the guy who runs the meetings and pointed out to him that he never calls on women to run [meetings]. And he reflected as how he didn't. He started saying, "Oh, I'm always trying to get them [women] to do the education. So-and-so's so good!" I go, "No, no, no,

no, no! You don't ghettoize the women in education." (Block, Roberson, & Merriweather, 2008)

In this example, the woman holds the male scientist directly accountable for his stereotypical beliefs and actions. This strategy is a way to affirm one's social identity group and to challenge the misconceptions of those in the dominant group (Roberts, 2005).

Positive distinctiveness. Along with directly challenging negative aspects of the stereotype about one's social identity group, individuals may also respond to stereotype threat at work by communicating favorable attributes of one's social identity group. Positive distinctiveness, as defined by Roberts (2005), refers to the effort to override negative images of one's identity group with new and more meaningful positive ones. In using this strategy an individual works to generate positive social value for that identity group by making his or her group distinct and stressing the importance of that distinction. These strategies communicate that one places value on a given social identity. An example of a positive distinctiveness strategy would be a Black female executive who displays African cultural artifacts or books on Black achievement in her workplace to subtly affirm her cultural identity (Bell & Nkomo, 2003).

Collective action. Another strategy used in resilience is seeking to change the context so that it is more inclusive for those who share one's identity through collective action (Roberts, 2005). There are many contextual factors that create the conditions for stereotype threat, such as skewed demographics and a pressure to assimilate to the dominant culture or buy into workplace norms (Steele et al., 2002). When individuals realize that they are not alone in contending against negative stereotypes, they may choose to join with others in an effort to change the context. These group-level strategies consist of engaging in collective action and social change for the betterment of the group's welfare. Many large corporations have employee network and affinity groups that provide social support, developmental opportunities, and advocacy for women, people of color, and LGBT employees. The National Science Foundation's ADVANCE program for the advancement of women in science and engineering careers has a national agenda that serves to change the context for women scientists by increasing representation and retention of women in science, fostering an environment that will result in leadership among women and shifting institutional cultural norms that are more inclusive.

Redefining criteria for success. A further strategy used in response to stereotype threat when resilient is to redefine one's own criteria for success at work. This involves establishing what success means on one's own terms, not based on others' standards for evaluation or upward progression (Steele et al., 2002).

It incorporates shifting priorities to what one values and choosing to acknowledge that as a standard by which to measure success. For example, redefining criteria for success for women faculty could mean moving into an administrative track position from a tenure-track position (Committee on Maximizing the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering, Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy, National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, & Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2007). Increasing numbers of women are also starting their own businesses. According to the 2006 U.S. census report, the number of women-owned businesses increased 20% between 1997 and 2002, which is twice the national average for growth in all businesses (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The rising participation of women in small businesses may be in part from the persistent stereotype threat that women encounter in large corporations and, in response, redefining the criteria for which they will measure and achieve their own success. The prevalence of stereotypes is also cause for many women to hit the proverbial "glass ceiling," which prevents women from reaching the upper echelons of management in organizations. Many women, therefore, elect to bypass the barrier that prevents them from becoming senior executive officers and start their own firms and businesses (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). The dramatic increase in women-owned businesses is an example of changing and redefining what it means to be successful. Although stereotype threat has arguably been a persistent threat, this dramatic increase in the number of women-owned businesses could be a sign that more women are responding with resilience to the threat rather than just trying to fend it off or being discouraged.

Effectiveness of the resilient to the stereotype response. The process of becoming resilient may result in a deeper appreciation for one's identity. As one Black female executive noted, "As long as we keep dusting off, as long as we don't let the dust stay on us, then we realize that there is something quite extraordinary about being a Black woman" (Bell & Nkomo, 2003, p. 216). Conveying positive distinctiveness and challenging the stereotype of one's group have been shown to enhance self-esteem by demonstrating one's competence in the face of a stereotype (Swim & Thomas, 2006). However, efforts to make one's group distinct through positive distinctiveness from the dominant group, who holds the power to define the norms and has access to the resources, can also damage access to those resources (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998). One who consistently challenges negative stereotypes of the group may be typecast as a "rabble rouser" by the dominant group and may preclude the group from achieving equitable status (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998). In addition, individuals who resolve to challenge stereotypes may personally

demonstrate a decrease in task engagement because they are more focused on challenging the stereotype than they are on their own performance, which could serve to reinforce the effects of stereotype threat if their performance is detrimentally affected (Roberts, 2005).

Redefining one's criteria for success may positively affect one's self-esteem. However, it does not encourage systemic change. As women and people of color start their own businesses and refocus their priorities, the status quo of the mainstream organizations can be maintained. Seeking to change the context by engaging in collective action can improve a group's social standing, though disruption to the existing social system may occur. However, successful social change not only benefits the disadvantaged group but also results in a more equitable system that may prove beneficial to the previously dominant group in the long run (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998). In sum, although there are risks associated with resilience strategies when contending with stereotype threat, the benefits may ultimately result in a system that is equitable and beneficial to all groups involved.

Factors That Influence Responses to Stereotype Threat

We believe that individuals' responses to stereotype threat will be influenced by both individual factors, such as level of group identification and career stage, as well as organizational factors that provide cues about the salience of group membership, such as the demographic composition and cultural centeredness of the workplace. An important avenue for future research is to understand the factors that influence which response an individual will have to stereotype threat.

Individual factors. Klinger (1977) proposed a stage model in understanding individuals' reactions to having an important goal blocked, and it could also be the case that some individuals do respond to stereotype threat in a similar cycle as well. Thus, career stage may be a factor that influences how an individual responds to stereotype threat. Anecdotal evidence suggests that members of stereotyped groups may experience stereotype threat differently as they advance in their career. For example, in early stages of their careers, women scientists receive more positive attention; however, as they advance in rank, their experience of stereotype threat increases (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999; Monroe, Ozyurt, Wrigley, & Alexander, 2008). A MIT study of the experiences of 22 female faculty found that women at the start of their career felt well supported by their department and believed that they would not encounter gender discrimination. However, as

they progressed in their career and experienced difficulty in attaining their goals, their awareness of discrimination increased. Thus, when stereotype threat is experienced in the early career stages, individuals may be more likely to respond by fending off the stereotype and attributing failure to their own abilities since their experience of stereotype threat is more ambiguous. As they advance in their career and experience repeated disappointment, they may be more likely to respond to stereotype threat by being discouraged by the stereotype. In later career stages, individuals who have successfully overcome obstacles may be more likely to respond by being resilient to the stereotype and trying to improve the treatment of their social identity group in the workplace. This cycle of responses to stereotype threat has been supported by research that has demonstrated that stigmatized group members will undertake attempts at social change (a strategy representative of being resilient to the stereotype) only when individual mobility (a strategy representative of fending off the stereotype) has proven to be almost completely impossible (Taylor & McKirnan, 1984; Wright, Taylor, & Moghadadam, 1990).

However, factors other than career stage will likely also influence the type of response that an individual has to the experience of stereotype threat. There are several individual difference factors that may influence how an individual perceives and responds to stereotype threat (Steele et al., 2002). Level of group identification, the degree to which an individual identifies with a negatively stereotyped group, may also affect responses to stereotype threat. Research has found that individuals who are low in group identification are more likely to try to distance themselves from their devalued group and focus on improving their own status (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, de Vries, & Wilke, 1988). By contrast, individuals who identify highly with their social identity group are more likely to try to improve the treatment of their group. In doing so, they seek to demonstrate that the negative stereotype associated with their group is not relevant (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998). Thus, individuals low in group identification are more likely to pursue individual-focused strategies, such as fending off the stereotype, whereas individuals high in group identification are more likely to employ group-focused strategies, such as being resilient to the stereotype and trying to improve the treatment of their group (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Ellemers et al., 1988).

It may also be simplistic to assume that members of all identity groups will respond similarly to stereotype threat. Research has found women who are high on gender identification were more susceptible to stereotype threat than women who were low on gender identification (Bergeron, Block, & Echtenkamp, 2006; Schmader, 2002). The opposite effect has been found for

racial identification. Oyserman, Harrison, and Bybee (2001) demonstrated that African Americans who were highly identified with their racial group were buffered against the negative effects of stereotype threat on their self-esteem. Similarly, research on the influence of racial identity statuses on the experience of stereotype threat found that Black racial identity attitudes moderated the negative effects of stereotype threat on performance (Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006). Specifically, a high degree of internalization attitudes buffered African Americans from the negative performance effects of stereotype threat in situations where stereotype threat was weak but not when stereotype threat was strong, suggesting that the situational threat posed by the existence of negative stereotypes may be so strong as to override individual differences in identities. Therefore, current research is mixed as to whether and when gender and racial identity influence the experience of stereotype threat. There has not yet been research directly examining whether racial or gender identity may predict which strategies individuals will use when responding to stereotype threat. Furthermore, this model focuses primarily on one dimension of identity rather than multiple identities. It is likely that individuals respond to stereotype threat differently depending on which of the multiple identity dimensions are made salient by a given stereotype in a given situation (Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999).

Organizational factors. Organizational factors are also likely to influence the extent to which individuals in the demographic minority experience stereotype threat at work. Organizational factors can highlight the individual's social identity as well as the salience of societal stereotypes, resulting in stereotype threat (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). One organizational factor that increases the relevance of stereotypes is token or solo status in the workplace. Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism argues that in organizational contexts that have a dominant proportion of employees of a particular gender or race, minority employees may be evaluated by others in terms of their identity group memberships. Research has found that tokens feel distinctive and expect to be stereotyped by others (e.g., Cohen & Swim, 1995; Kanter, 1977; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998). Roberson et al. (2003) showed that African American managers who were the sole minority in their work department were more likely to report experiencing stereotype threat at work than non-solo African American managers. These solo African American managers were also less likely to seek direct feedback from their superiors, more likely to pay attention to indirect feedback, and more likely to discount performance feedback from superiors. This pattern of feedback-seeking behavior is reflective of the strategy of being discouraged by the stereotype.

Another organizational factor that may signal to the employee that stereotypes are salient is the organization's cultural centeredness (Steele et al., 2002). Cultural centeredness refers to the extent to which a setting holds that the culture or subculture associated with a particular social identity is essential to the optimal functioning of that setting (Steele et al., 2002). The cultural centeredness of a workplace can be signaled through cues including the intellectual skills and styles that the setting recognizes and values. Stereotype threat can, therefore, occur among employees who do not share the favored identity that is signaled by the cultural centeredness of the organization. Furthermore, the diversity philosophy (color blind vs. values diversity) of the organization can convey the likelihood that an individual will experience stereotype threat (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlmann, & Crosby, 2008). Research has shown that these cues influence the degree to which minorities will trust and feel comfortable in the organization (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).

The presence of these organizational factors that serve as social cues as to the meaning of one's identity in the work environment are likely to influence both the extent to which an individual experiences stereotype threat and how an individual responds to stereotype threat. Future research should examine the influence of these types of organizational factors on an individual's experience of stereotype threat. There has not yet been research directly examining whether various organizational factors may predict which strategies individuals will use when responding to stereotype threat. It is important to note that these organizational factors may also change throughout the employee's career, so that as the organization's culture toward diversity changes and the numeric representation of women and minorities shifts, so too might the susceptibility for stereotype threat to emerge for the employee.

Conclusions

We have presented a conceptual model of responses to stereotype threat in the workplace that draws on research from social psychology on the effects of stereotype threat on short-term task performance, counseling psychology on how people cope with having valued goals blocked, and social identity on how people respond to identity threats. In drawing on these various areas of research, this model provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the various ways that individuals may cope with the long-term effects of stereotype threat in the workplace.

This model extends previous work on stereotype threat in three ways. First, our model provides a framework for understanding responses to

stereotype threat in a workplace setting. The vast majority of conceptual and empirical work on stereotype threat has focused solely on academic performance (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). Second, our model describes categories of responses that may co-occur when contending with stereotype threat. Although previous research has examined a variety of responses to stereotype threat, these responses have not been examined comprehensively, nor has there been a framework to understand which responses may co-occur. Finally, based on Klinger (1977) this model proposes a framework of possible responses that individuals will have when encountering stereotype threat at work.

This model serves as a framework for organizing past research on stereotype threat and also as an agenda for future research on the long-term effects of stereotype threat in the workplace. Research should be directed at examining this model in a variety of settings to determine how this model may vary across different groups that experience stereotype threat at work. This research should use a variety of methodologies to examine this framework. It will be important to use qualitative methods to examine the types of strategies people employ and whether they are seen as effective. Longitudinal research will be useful to examine whether these strategies change over time.

The conceptual framework introduced here identifies new areas for research in counseling psychology. Although research in counseling psychology has documented the impact of bias, discrimination, and microaggressions at work on individual well-being (e.g., Sue et al., 2008), this article identifies the influence a different type of threat that exists for people in the demographic minority at work—stereotype threat. Very little research has been done to examine the influence of this threat on choices people make across their careers. We hope that this model provides a framework to begin this type of research.

Our model also has implications for the training of counseling professionals. Counseling psychologists have been at the forefront of developing a set of guidelines on multicultural competence that are useful for psychologists in all areas of practice (American Psychological Association, 2003). It may be that part of this training should be directed toward understanding the impact that stereotype threat may have on individuals in the demographic minority at work throughout their careers. This model may be useful for training counseling professionals because it highlights the variety of responses an individual may have to stereotype threat. This model makes explicit that not all individuals will experience and respond to stereotype threat in the same way. This may expand the repertoire of options that counseling professionals have in working with an individual experiencing stereotype threat.

This model also has implications for practice that are relevant for remediation, prevention, and advocacy. First, in terms of remediation, this model offers new dimensions for counselors and coaches to listen to and inquire about presenting problems around workplace issues. Second, in terms of prevention, this model may help counselors and coaches work with individuals in career decision making. Social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000) encourages individuals to examine perceived barriers and supports associated with different career options. This model offers a new way to think about, anticipate, prepare for, and strategize about potential barriers faced by individuals in the demographic minority in their occupations. Finally, in terms of advocacy, organizational consultants and coaches can work with human resources to hold workshops to address issues of stereotype threat and how people respond. Providing individuals with this information may help to normalize the experience for people going through it and may provide a framework for managers to understand what their employees may be experiencing.

Stereotypes are widely held cultural beliefs that are resistant to change. Therefore, it is likely that employees in the demographic minority will continue to encounter stereotype threat at work. An important implication of our model is that each of the responses to stereotype threat has both positive and negative consequences for the individual. Understanding how employees experience and cope with stereotype threat will help to foster a more diverse and inclusive environment at work. If clinicians and consultants are aware that employees may react to stereotype threat in a variety of ways, they may be better able to support employees as they contend with this pervasive threat at work. Although our model focuses on how an individual employee responds to stereotype threat, it is critical that future research examine organizational and group-level strategies to change the context so that stereotype threat will be less pervasive in workplace environments.

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