

CHAPTER

15

A Barrier of Mistrust: How Negative Stereotypes Affect Cross-Race Mentoring

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A short time ago, a friend of ours began a job as a teacher in an inner-city school. He had studied education for several years, and now he had a chance to practice what he loved. For the first weeks, however, he found the work far more demanding than he had anticipated. The academic theory he had learned concerning the classroom had failed, it seemed, to prepare him for what actually occurred there. What surprised him most was the significance of race. Even among his young students, most of whom were ethnic minorities, racial stereotypes had shaped their expectations about him as a white teacher and about their prospects in school more generally. His students talked about the images that the media, and society at large, painted of their groups—and how these images presented, at worst, an insulting portrayal of their ethnic groups, and at best a pessimistic one. They worried that such images might bias the treatment they received not only from teachers but from other

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gatekeepers of educational opportunity. In a system tarnished by racism, they wondered, what assurance did they have that their efforts in school today would lead to advancement tomorrow?

While this anecdote raises several issues, we use it here to illustrate an often underappreciated concept in the psychology of motivation—trust. To excel at almost any endeavor, people need to trust that relevant authority figures have their best interests at heart (see also Tyler, Smith, & Huo, 1996). Of course, a given teacher, school, or institution may not deserve trust. But when trust is warranted, students are best served if they can feel certain that educators believe in their potential and care about their welfare.

Given the key role that trust plays in academic settings, members of historically oppressed groups may suffer a disadvantage, insofar as the past treatment of their groups in society gives them grounds to mistrust authority figures. In fact, personal experience alone may provide African-Americans, Latino-Americans, and Native Americans with ample reason to fear being judged or treated prejudicially. Without trust in the integrity of educators and academic institutions, their motivation in school may falter, particularly in situations that trigger concerns about their group's acceptance. Indeed, much of the well-documented scholastic achievement gap between ethnic minority students and their white peers reflects, we argue, the devastating consequences of racial mistrust (see Steele, 1997). A crucial challenge faced by educators working across racial lines, the present chapter thus suggests, is to forge trusting relationships (Marx, Brown, & Steele, 1999; Steele, 1999; see also Bryk & Schneider, 1996).

The analysis presented in this chapter rests on three claims. The first claim asserts that stigmatization impedes trust. Being a member of a socially devalued group can cause a student to question whether teachers, schools, or societal institutions more generally will provide reliably fair and kind treatment. The second claim asserts that the mistrust elicited by stigmatization can, in turn, cause motivation and performance to suffer. Students will feel reluctant to invest themselves in a domain where they could be subjected to biased judgment or treatment. The final claim asserts that allaying the threat of stigmatization will help to create trust and to improve motivation. Students who feel assured that they will not be viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, that is, will be more likely to trust their educators. They will thus feel safe to invest their effort, and even their identity, in scholastic pursuits.

Below we present a selective review of research to buttress each of these three theoretical claims. Next, we describe work conducted in our own laboratory, where we applied this theory to a key educational dilemma—the challenge to provide critical but constructive feedback across lines of difference, specifically across the racial and gender divides. In a later section of the chapter, we use the same conceptual framework to understand how a “stigma of racism” may hamper the performance of *teachers* who work in demographically diverse classrooms. Then, in a final section, we review several additional

intervention strategies. Each one boosts the achievement of minority students, we argue, by allaying the threat of stigmatization and thus creating a basis for trust.

STIGMATIZATION IMPEDES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRUST

Because minority students know that members of their ethnic group have long faced prejudice, and because they may have experienced such prejudice personally, they may rightfully feel wary of people who do not belong to their ethnic group, especially in evaluative situations where negative racial stereotypes could be used against them. Theorists have long noted the potentially large costs incurred by trusting someone who could ultimately prove untrustworthy (Gambetta, 1990; see also Fukuyama, 1995; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). For that reason, minority students may reasonably view white teachers with suspicion until they have evidence that they are worthy of trust.

The default assumption may thus be that people outside one's ethnic group are biased, even when these outsiders do not explicitly harbor prejudicial beliefs. In one study, both black undergraduates and their white classmates vastly overestimated the degree to which peers of the other racial group stereotyped their own race (Krueger, 1996). In fact, members of both ethnic groups reported similarly positive feelings toward blacks and whites. Nevertheless, they predicted that members of the *other* race would express far more negative evaluations of their *own* race than they actually did. Because they are aware of our country's history of racial prejudice and conflict, people may reasonably suspect—sometimes accurately, sometimes inaccurately—that the hearts and minds of those beyond the boundary of their ethnic group are biased.

In any specific interaction, racial mistrust is apt to prove particularly acute when the possibility of being discredited on the basis of one's race is plausible rather than implausible. Features of the situation that alter the salience or relevance of one's race—and thus affect its potential to bias another person's response—can dramatically influence trust. In one study, black college students and their white peers received negative interpersonal feedback from a white student who, they were led to believe, sat on the other side of a one-way mirror (Crocker, Voelkl, & Major, 1991). Black students proved more likely than white students to believe that the feedback was motivated by the evaluator's prejudice. However, this race difference in trust was most pronounced when the curtains of the one-way mirror were open rather than closed and, students thus could presume that the evaluator was aware of their race. Stigmatization leads to mistrust primarily when group members recognize that a stereotype could plausibly be used against them, in situations, that is, where their race is known, and where the stereotype

impugns their general worth or their specific abilities at the task at hand (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998).

Not only may members of ethnic minority groups show decrements in trust as a result of stigmatization. Rather, anyone who fears being rejected on the basis of a personal characteristic might anticipate being judged with prejudice rather than viewed with respect (Goffman, 1963). Even ordinarily nonstigmatized individuals may thus respond mistrustfully when the situation causes them to feel suspect in the eyes of others. In one classic experiment, for example, subjects were temporarily given a stigma by having a simulated scar cosmetically applied to their face (Kleck & Strenta, 1980). While ostensibly touching it up, however, the experimenter wiped off the scar without the subject's knowledge. Feeling physically disfigured gives people grounds to wonder if others will accept them (Davis, 1961; Goffman, 1963; Hastorf, Wildfogel, & Cassman, 1979). Subjects in the present study, believing that a scar was visible on their face, thus had reason to question whether others would treat them with fairness and kindness.

In fact, the results of the study yielded dramatic support for this reasoning (Kleck & Strenta, 1980). After the scar had been removed, subjects participated in a discussion with a fellow student, and then later commented on their partner's demeanor. Subjects reported that the scar had caused their partner to treat them in an awkward and patronizing manner—the person, they felt, had been unable to get past their physical disfigurement. However, the scar's removal prior to this interaction ensured that subjects were *not* treated differently on the basis of a facial deformity, and in fact independent observers found no evidence of systematic differences in the partner's behavior as a function of whether subjects believed they possessed a scar or not. Rather, subjects who thought that they appeared facially disfigured engaged in a fine-grained analysis of their partner's behavior, finding evidence of bias in nonverbal cues that they would otherwise overlook (Strenta & Kleck, 1984; see also Vorauer & Ross, 1993).

Clearly, it is an oversimplification to equate the stigmatization felt by subjects in the present study with that faced by ethnic minorities. In many cases, the prejudice minority students sense is real rather than merely perceived. Their mistrust, moreover, derives not from an illusory scar, but from the lessons of history and personal experience. Because racism can be subtle in its manifestations, and because its effects can prove costly, it is adaptive to be vigilant for prejudice (see Frable, Blackstone, & Scherbaum, 1990). Nevertheless, the results described in this experiment offer at least one important lesson: The relationship between stigmatization and trust is general rather than specific to any one group. Even a *transitory* stigma, conferred to persons from a historically *nonstigmatized* group, can create mistrust, wherein the good will of other people comes to be questioned rather than assumed (see also Aronson, Lustina, Keough, Brown, & Steele, 1999; Leyens, Désert, Croizet, & Darcis, 2000).

MISTRUST UNDERMINES MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE

Persistence in an endeavor is sustained by a faith that one will both be viewed as an individual and be included in important relationships. Negative stereotypes erode this trust, and thus reduce the likelihood of scholastic success. Students who suspect racial bias, for example, may prove less motivated to comply with teachers' specific instructions for improvement. Black students in one study thus discounted the objectivity of performance feedback more from a white evaluator than from a black one; and they also chose to persevere in their own strategies rather than adopt those recommendations made by the white evaluator (Banks, Stitt, Curtis, & McQuarter, 1977). Moreover, people who fear being stereotyped are apt to suffer dramatic decrements in self-confidence (Stangor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998).

At each level of achievement, one's race may raise doubts about the quality of treatment that one can expect from relevant authorities. Students may thus be discouraged from fully investing themselves in school. As much research attests, the quality of relationships with school authorities conveys important information about one's standing and general prospects within relevant academic domains (see Tyler et al., 1996). Unfair, inattentive, or disrespectful treatment suggests that the student (and perhaps the student's race) has a low standing and unfavorable prospects. By contrast, fair, attentive, or respectful treatment communicates good standing and favorable prospects. As social psychologists have long noted, people who evaluate their position and prospects favorably within a group are apt to internalize relevant group norms and values, and they seek to fulfill group-based standards of behavior and performance (Tyler et al., 1996; Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996). To the extent that minority students believe that they might be excluded or rejected on the basis of race, they may thus view school as irrelevant to their self-interests and identity.

In an impressive line of research, Tom Tyler, Allan Lind, and their colleagues underscore the role of trust in motivation. In a variety of settings, including school, family, and work, they find that judgments about the quality of one's relationships with authorities prove to be among the strongest predictors not only of whether individuals comply with the decisions of authorities, but also of whether they adopt the values of their organization (Huo et al., 1996; Tyler et al., 1996). Employees are more likely to embrace the ideals of their company, and they even will go beyond the formal requirements of their position, when they feel that management is "on their side" and generally responsive to their needs. In fact, trust appears more important in determining identification with an organization (and subsequent motivation) than the objective rewards and punishments provided by the authority (Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998; Tyler et al., 1996; Huo et al., 1996).

People decide whether to trust individuals or organizations by assessing the consistency with which they apply rules and the fairness with which they make decisions (Tyler et al., 1996; Huo et al., 1996). The objective grades and feedback students receive thus seem to matter less than the perceived fairness of the system that provides them. If students believe that the academic system is fair—if they trust the legitimacy of the *procedures* it uses—they will maintain motivation in the face of most decisions or outcomes. Only when students think that the system could be biased against them or their ethnic group will they focus on a given outcome and the potential bias that motivated it.

The reasoning outlined here dovetails with the body of research on "stereotype threat" (Aronson, Quinn, & Spencer, 1998; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997; see also Aronson, Chapter 14 in this volume). As that work demonstrates, minority students working on a standardized GRE test, or for that matter on any demanding intellectual task, may worry about confirming a negative stereotype about their ethnic group. They must contend with the threatening possibility that, should their performance falter, it could substantiate the racial stereotype's allegation of limited ability. In the short term, stereotype threat can cause anxiety and distraction debilitating enough to undermine academic performance. In the long term, it can lead students to disidentify from scholastic pursuits, prompting them to invest their efforts and identity in areas where they are less subject to doubt. Stereotype threat, it could be argued, sprouts from a crack in social trust. Students cannot trust that their performance will be judged fairly, inasmuch as they worry that a specific failure on their part could be viewed as evidence of racial inferiority.

A recent study conducted by Joseph Brown and Claude Steele specifically highlighted the role of trust in stereotype threat. They began by documenting a familiar pattern: black college students performed worse than did their white peers on a difficult GRE test (see Marx, Brown, & Steele, 1999). The researchers wondered, however, if black students would do better if they could trust that the test would not be used to substantiate racial stereotypes—if they were assured, in Tyler's language, that it was procedurally fair. Students in one experimental condition were presented with the same GRE test, but they were first informed that the designers of the test, many of whom were said to be black, had ensured that it was *racially fair*. Students thus knew that their poor performance would not be taken as evidence of a racial inferiority, because any biased test content that would produce a racial difference had allegedly been removed. In fact, the performance of black students in this condition improved so dramatically that it equaled that of their white peers. Notably, more commonplace strategies to enhance performance, such as boosting self-efficacy, proved ineffective. It was not low self-confidence that hurt black students on the test; it was a lack of trust.

ALLAYING STIGMATIZATION ENHANCES MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE

Both teacher and student thus face a challenge. The teacher must communicate that he or she is trustworthy, despite the potential for racism that exists both in the academic system in particular and in society more generally. The student, in turn, has to make a risky leap of faith, going beyond at times inconclusive evidence to assume that a given teacher or academic institution is worthy of trust. The first step, we believe, lies with teachers and the schools they represent. They must educate in a "wise" manner, that is, in a way that communicates to students that they will neither be viewed nor be treated in light of a negative stereotype. The term *wise* is borrowed from the sociologist Erving Goffman (1963), who had borrowed it from the gay subculture of the 1950s. In its original usage, the term referred to straight individuals who were recognized for their ability to see the full humanity of gay men and women. The present use of the term *wise* evokes a similar connotation. Wise strategies are those that assure stigmatized students that they will not be judged or treated stereotypically—that their abilities and belonging are assumed rather than doubted. Such strategies lift the threat of stigmatization, allowing minority students both to trust their educators and to safely invest themselves in school.

Assuring students of the racially fair nature of the testing and decision procedures, as in the study conducted by Brown and Steele noted above, can constitute one wise intervention. But even strategies that do not *explicitly* refer to race can be wise. The effectiveness of such strategies is suggested by the many educators and intervention programs who, in defiance of troubling statistics on minority achievement, have raised the grades, test scores, and college prospects of at-risk and minority youth (see Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999, for a review). The educators in these programs all refute negative stereotypes by conveying a faith in each student's intellectual potential. But they do not impart this message by assigning easier work to ensure student success, or by offering heavy doses of unstinting praise—all-too-common tactics of well-meaning but unwise teachers. In fact, several researchers offer detailed discussions of the dangers of "overpraising" and "underchallenging" students (Barker & Graham, 1987; Massey, Scott, & Dornbusch, 1975; Brophy, 1981; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Rather, minority students in all of these otherwise diverse success stories are challenged with high performance standards, standards that *presume* their motivation and ability to succeed. The educators in these programs often go an important step further by explicitly assuring students of their capacity to meet those standards through greater effort.

Jaime Escalante (whose work was portrayed in the movie *Stand and Deliver* and documented in a book by Mathews, 1988) challenged his East Los Angeles Latino students to take and pass the advanced placement (AP) exam in

calculus (see Cohen et al., 1999). Escalante's students met this standard. In fact, for a time, they accounted for 27% of all Mexican Americans receiving college credit on their AP exam, and the rate of advanced placement compared favorably with that obtained in many privileged suburban schools. Xavier University, which despite its small size and scant endowment, sends more black students to medical schools than any other university, and Georgia Tech, which enjoys exceptional success in graduating minority students from its engineering curriculum, similarly set highly demanding standards (see also Rosenthal, Chapter 2 in this volume; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

The benefits conferred by the invocation of high standards are apt to be limited unless the student is also assured, implicitly or explicitly, that he or she is capable of reaching the higher standards (Cohen et al., 1999). Effective interventions thus continually convey the message that students can succeed through effort and persistence. In a sense, the message is that academic ability, or even so-called intelligence, is not fixed or immutable (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; see also Chapter 3 by Dweck and Chapter 14 by Aronson in this volume). Rather, it can be enhanced through effortful practice and the cultivation of specific skills. Norman Francis, the president of Xavier University, explains his institution's educational philosophy eloquently: "From the very beginning, we always believed that every youngster could learn, that the mind was an unlimited facility, that if you gave the support, provided the environment and the teachers, young people would exceed even their own potential" (quoted in Cose, 1997). To drive home that message, Xavier's prospective premedical students are bombarded with information on careers, especially those in the areas of science and health, from the outset. The lesson conveyed is clear: "success is attainable becoming a physician is not an impossible dream" (Cose, 1997).

THE MENTOR'S DILEMMA: A SPECIFIC APPLICATION

In a series of experiments conducted with our colleague Lee Ross, we focused on what we call the "mentor's dilemma"—the challenge to provide critical but constructive feedback without undermining the student's motivation to succeed (Cohen et al., 1999). Along with tutorial instruction, the quality of feedback that students receive constitutes one of the strongest predictors of scholastic accomplishment (Bloom, 1984; Walberg, 1984). The mentor's dilemma, we reasoned, should prove particularly acute when critical feedback must be conveyed across racial lines. Because they know that their abilities are negatively stereotyped, minority students may mistrust the person providing the feedback. Following the receipt of critical feedback, they may consequently feel less motivated to undertake further efforts to improve their work.

The real-world success stories noted above highlighted the effectiveness of combining an invocation of high standards with an assurance of students'

capacity to reach those standards. Such a strategy should prove particularly helpful to the mentor who is obliged to provide critical feedback across racial lines. The invocation of high standards would encourage students to view the critical nature of the feedback as a reflection of rigorous performance standards rather than racial bias. Moreover, the assurance would allay students' fear of confirming the stereotype by failing to meet the critic's demanding standards. The *explicitness* of these two messages, we reasoned, would prove disproportionately important for minority students. White students receiving rigorous criticism, that is, should be more inclined than minority students to automatically *infer* that high standards are being applied and to further *assume* that they are seen as capable of meeting those standards.

In our first study, African American undergraduates and their white peers wrote a letter of commendation for their favorite teacher. They were informed that the best letters would be published in an education journal. The following week, students returned and received a "revise and resubmit" verdict on their letter, ostensibly from a member of the journal's editorial board, along with critical feedback pointing out areas of weakness and suggesting strategies for improvement. Our experiments pitted the effect of "unbuffered" criticism, that is, criticism unaccompanied by any additional information, against that of "wise" criticism, that is, criticism accompanied by the stigmatization-dispelling combination of high standards and personal assurance.

Two experimental details were added to lead black participants to view the feedback as potentially biased. At the first session, prior to receiving the criticism, students had their photograph taken with an instant camera, and this photograph was then appended to their letter. Students were thus alerted that anyone who evaluated their letter would be aware of their race. In addition, at the second session, students learned the name of the reviewer who ostensibly evaluated their letter, and this name was recognizably Caucasian: "Dr. Gardiner Lindsay."

When provided with unbuffered feedback in this manner, black students proved more inclined than white students to suspect bias on the part of the evaluator. This mistrust, in turn, undermined motivation: black students felt less interested than their white classmates in undertaking a revision of their letter. However, when the same critical feedback was accompanied by the combination of an invocation of high standards and a personal assurance of the student's capacity to reach those standards, black students suspected little if any bias on the part of the evaluator, and their motivation improved so dramatically that it surpassed, slightly, that of their white peers. In addition, *all* students in this treatment condition reported greater interest in pursuing career possibilities that demand writing skills. The wise, two-faceted intervention proved more effective than the commonplace tactic of preceding critical feedback with a buffer of performance praise. Indeed, one striking result was that although the criticism suggested that a major revision of their work was necessary, black students receiving "wise criticism" felt as efficacious and

motivated as students in an additional condition who received *only* positive feedback.

A later study disentangled the effect of invoking high standards from that of assuring students of their capacity to reach those standards. Accompanying critical feedback with only a warning that high standards would be imposed deflected attributions of racial bias, but by itself failed to raise motivation on the part of black students. Indeed, in the absence of the personal assurance, such a forewarning of heightened standards seemed to exacerbate threat. Black students still had to wonder if their capacity to reach such daunting standards was in doubt, and they thus benefited from the additional personal assurance featured in fully wise feedback.

GENERALIZING THE FRAMEWORK: WOMEN WORKING IN THE NATURAL SCIENCES

The theory outlined here asserts that stigmatization impedes trust, which in turn undermines motivation. Dispelling stigmatization, for example, with the wise intervention used in our research, establishes a basis for trust, and thus improves motivation. The theory should generalize to other populations who face group-based doubts about their abilities. In fact, women working in math, science, and engineering have long confronted negative stereotypes about their potential and belonging in these fields (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999). As early as elementary school, girls receive less encouragement than boys in math and science; and as late as college, women abandon the study of math and science at a rate nearly three times that of men, even though they earn grades in relevant coursework that equal and even slightly exceed those of their male peers (see Steele, 1997).

We began with the observation that women working in scientific disciplines are apt to receive much of their instruction from male superiors. It seemed plausible that the male–female achievement gap in the sciences may be due, at least in part, to gender mistrust and its detrimental effects on motivation and performance. In fact, one study found that doctoral graduates who had worked with a mentor of the *opposite* sex later achieved an average publication rate only a fourth that of graduates who had worked with mentors of the *same* sex (Goldstein, 1979; see also Crosby, 1999). Because they know that their scientific abilities are negatively stereotyped, women may wonder if they are granted as much respect as men in pursuits that demand such skills, and this mistrust could diminish their prospects for success.

In one of our studies, science and engineering majors of both sexes received either “wise” or “unwise” critical feedback on a task relevant to their skills and long-term prospects in scientific pursuits—preparing and delivering a research presentation. One week later, they received a critical review of their performance ostensibly from a male science professor. Our study went beyond self-

report measures of motivation to examine the effect of feedback on *performance*. Specifically, upon receiving feedback about their initial performance, students had an opportunity to give their presentation again, after being provided with sufficient time to incorporate the suggestions for improvement offered in the context of the feedback.

Compared with men, women receiving *unbuffered* critical feedback responded mistrustfully. They felt that the reviewer had been unfair and biased in his assessment of their presentation. Women receiving this unbuffered feedback also proved less likely, in their revisions, to comply with the reviewer's recommendations for improvement. Finally, women in this condition also produced worse overall presentation revisions, and they communicated less technically difficult subject matter, than did subjects in any other condition of the experiment. Interestingly, the performance of female students showed only slight improvement when the same critical feedback was accompanied only by a personal assurance of their capacity to "do better." Without the additional invocation of high standards used in fully wise feedback, it seems, such an assurance can send the discouraging message that hard work on the student's part can only raise the level of their performance from utter deficiency to mere adequacy.

When, however, the same critical feedback featured the wise combination of high standards and assurance, women felt greater trust, and they showed stunning gains in *performance*. In fact, the percentage of women who complied with a central suggestion made by the critic—to incorporate an outline at the beginning of their presentation—was far greater in the wise criticism condition (72%) than it did in the condition featuring unbuffered criticism (11%). Indeed, in the wise criticism condition, women's *overall* performance improved so dramatically that the average overall quality of their presentations proved superior to that of subjects—male or female—in any other condition of the experiment.

The explicit invocation of high standards and assurance of personal capacity will prove particularly beneficial, we believe, at junctures where students receive feedback more critical than what they believe their performance merits. In such cases, they may be particularly liable to mistrust the evaluator's motives. Teachers, managers, and coaches may recall analogous situations, where the feedback they provided or the decisions they made conflicted with what their subordinates expected or simply wanted to be told. Beyond the confines of the lab, such situations often arise in academic settings when students go from one scholastic environment to a more rigorous one—moving from high school to college, or from college to graduate school—and the standards for what constitutes an adequate performance rise sharply (Dweck et al., 1995). At these transitions, students may be surprised to find that the amount of effort that they had previously invested in their work no longer suffices to earn them the praise or favorable grades that they had once received. How they make sense of the abrupt increase in critical feedback

and scholastic frustration will affect their motivation and sense of belonging in school.

Nonstereotyped students may readily view the increased difficulty they experience as a reflection of elevated performance standards. Stereotyped students, by contrast, could potentially view it as a sign that they do not belong, as evidence that they have reached, in the eyes of others and perhaps in their own eyes as well, the limitation in ability alleged by the stereotyped. It may be no coincidence that, in at least one large longitudinal study, black students saw their GPA fall more than three times that of their white peers during the first major academic transition—as students left elementary school to enter junior high school (Simmons, Black, & Zhou, 1991). No doubt, this result reflects the institutional racism, school tracking policies, and inadequate academic preparation that put many black students at a disadvantage relative to white students. But the abrupt nature of the decline in achievement also raises the possibility that racial mistrust grows particularly acute when high standards are abruptly imposed without explanation or forewarning.

The wise intervention used in our studies is beneficial, it seems, because it makes explicit to negatively stereotyped students precisely the message that is apt to be implicit at least for the more privileged of nonminority students. Minority students and female science majors, that is, have grounds to wonder if the critical feedback they receive or the newly encountered academic hurdles they face imply that their race or gender puts them at risk. Our findings, we believe, offer an optimistic message about the potential to remedy such mistrust. Both minority students and female science majors seem *eager* to believe that they belong. In fact, they responded to the critical feedback provided in our studies as favorably as their nonstereotyped peers (indeed, somewhat *more* favorably), as long as that feedback was delivered in a manner that assured them that the stereotype would not be used against them.

THE OTHER SIDE: SOME EFFECTS OF STIGMATIZATION ON TEACHER FEEDBACK

The present chapter has focused on the role of stigmatization in undermining the achievement of students who face negative stereotypes. However, stigmatization may also undermine the performance of teachers who work across ethnic lines. Because they know that their group is stereotyped as being racially biased, white teachers working with minority students may worry that they will be viewed as insensitive or even prejudiced. In numerous studies, in fact, whites and other ordinarily nonstereotyped individuals seem to feel stigmatized when interacting with members of socially devalued groups. Their body language thus stiffens, their speech becomes fragmented, and they seek to end the interaction sooner rather than later (Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974; see also Kleck, Ono, & Hastorf, 1966). Majority group members may also hold "meta-

stereotypes"—beliefs about what members of a minority group think about members of a majority group (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Specifically, whites and members of other majority groups tend to believe that minority group members stereotype their group as prejudiced, unfair, or complacent about existing power imbalances; and they may fear being personally assimilated to that stereotype (Vorauer et al., 1998). In fact, in at least one study, meta-stereotypic beliefs on the part of whites proved superior to conventional measures of prejudice at predicting aversion to cross-race interaction (Vorauer et al., 1998). Both white educators and their minority students may thus face a similar dilemma. They both want to break free of an identity to which they fear the other has consigned them.

Inasmuch as white educators cannot trust that minority students will interpret their behavior charitably, their performance may suffer accordingly. They may focus less on teaching effectively, and more on projecting an egalitarian self-image, than they otherwise would. When working with minority students, white teachers may thus use critical feedback only sparingly for fear of appearing prejudiced and, instead, offer generous dollops of performance praise. Empirical research, in fact, buttresses this reasoning. Several studies find that, in the classroom, minority students are praised more and criticized less than their nonminority peers (for notable exceptions, see the review by Ferguson, 1998). In a schoolwide survey, black students reported receiving the *most* praise of any ethnic group, even though they spent the fewest number of hours on homework and received the worst grades (Massey et al., 1975). Moreover, white evaluators in a series of experiments responded to a poorly written essay with more positive feedback when they were led to believe that its author was *black* rather than *white* (Harber, 1996, 1998).

A stigma of racism appears to motivate the provision of the favorable commentary provided to minority students. In one study, the positive feedback bias proved most acute when evaluators' egalitarian self-image had been threatened (Harber, 1996). Subjects who were told that they had scored poorly on a test of racial tolerance thus offered the most positive assessments of a black student's essay. The number of favorable comments made also rose sharply if the subject provided the feedback publicly, and the black student responded with a sullen demeanor, neither smiling nor making eye contact, and thereby insinuated a suspicion that the evaluator was racist (Harber, 1996). The results suggest that instructors use positive feedback to fend off a stigma of racism, and that their minority students may thus be provided with *more* positive feedback and *less* negative feedback than their white peers.

At first consideration, such a practice might seem beneficial. Both conventional wisdom and empirical research attest to the pedagogical value of praise. Students receiving positive feedback in laboratory studies tend to like their evaluator more, feel more intrinsically motivated, and perform better at relevant tasks than do students receiving negative feedback or even no feedback (see Koestner, Zuckerman, & Koestner, 1987; Miller, Brickman, & Bolen, 1975).

On further consideration, however, it becomes clear that although praise can confer benefits, it can also exact costs (see Dweck, Chapter 3 in this volume; also Graham, 1990). In an illustrative study outside the classroom, for example, high school athletes who received the lion's share of praise from their coaches were, by the end of the season, the *least* confident in their athletic skills, even after individual differences in preseason ability were statistically controlled (Horn, 1985).

At least in certain circumstances, it seems, positive feedback can thus prove counterproductive. To the extent that teachers substitute praise for criticism, and easily achieved success for hard-won accomplishment, students are apt to learn less than they otherwise would. In addition, recent research underscores the negative *motivational* consequences of superfluous praise. As Carol Dweck and her colleagues have found, teachers who praise students' intelligence can send the harmful message that current performance provides evidence of innate ability rather than of the application of effort or the use of appropriate strategy (Mueller & Dweck, 1998; see also Dweck, Chapter 3 in this volume). Students who are praised for their ability may thus respond to later failure not by trying harder, or by implementing a new problem-solving strategy, but by concluding that they lack the requisite skills to continue. Ability praise communicates that scholastic performance provides a gauge of intelligence and even of self-worth, and it can thus lead students to view the inevitable scholastic setback as reason to withdraw effort.

Positive feedback can cause further harm to the extent that it communicates low expectations for future achievement. Praise for substandard performance, or for easy work, can send the message that little more is expected from the student (see Anderson, Evertson, & Brophy, 1979). Inasmuch as students recognize that the positive feedback provided was motivated by low expectations rather than by the merit of their work, they may suffer a drop in self-confidence. In one study, students who had been praised for their performance on an easy task felt *less* confident that they would do well on a new, more difficult set of problems (Meyer, Plöger, & Bachman, 1978, cited in Meyer, Bachmann, Biermann, Hempelmann, Plöger, & Spiller, 1979). By contrast, students who had received criticism felt *more* confident in the likelihood of future success. Critical feedback sent the galvanizing message that their initial performance, though perhaps adequate for another student, was not worthy of their potential.

Beyond communicating low expectations, the superfluous praise provided to minority students may exact at least two additional costs. First, it may lull students into accepting low performance standards, or otherwise deter them from trying to attain a higher level of achievement. The study by Massey and colleagues (1975) noted above found that although black high school students spent the least time on homework and earned the lowest grades, they rated their effort and performance in school as high as their white and Asian peers did. Positive feedback may have led them to believe that they were doing better in school than they actually were (Massey et al., 1975).

Teachers who overpraise minority students may also exacerbate racial mistrust rather than assuage it. Inasmuch as minority students recognize that the evaluation they receive is more positive than what their performance merits, they may view it as patronizing and even insulting. In one study, black students and their white peers were praised for their interpersonal qualities by a white stranger (Crocker et al., 1991). White students saw the feedback as a reflection of their own social graces, and subsequently their self-esteem *increased*. By contrast, black students who thought that the evaluator was aware of their race could reasonably wonder if the feedback was motivated by racial sympathy, and their self-esteem *decreased*. Minority students presumably recognized that the evaluator, having had no previous contact with them, had little if any basis for providing such a positive assessment. The feedback thus signaled that they had been viewed not as an individual, but as a token of their race (see Harber, 1996). Over time, moreover, minority students may rightfully come to doubt the genuineness behind whites' displays of approval, and they may thus ultimately discount even well-earned positive feedback.

The same theoretical framework used to understand the role of stigmatization in *student* performance can thus be used to understand its role in *teacher* performance. Educators may mistrust the way that their feedback in particular and their actions more generally could be interpreted in the minds of minority students. Their ability to teach in racially diverse classrooms may thus suffer because their attention is drawn from teaching effectively to deflecting charges of racial bias. Ironically, however, the feedback that teachers offer to entrust and encourage minority students may sow the seeds of further mistrust and discouragement.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CREATING TRUST

The need to combat the effects of stigmatization does not oblige the educator to withhold critical feedback, to lavish praise, or to otherwise lower performance standards in the hope of sustaining student motivation. Indeed, as noted above, doing so may cause the student more harm than good. Rather than alter the *content* of instruction, the educator (and student) might be better served by modifying the *context* in which such instruction occurs (Cohen et al., 1999). In the case of the highly selected black students and female science majors featured in our own research on feedback, motivation and performance were raised not by diluting the critical feedback offered or by softening its tone. What proved effective was providing that criticism in a context where its critical nature could be readily attributed to the existence of high and consistent standards and to the instructor's belief in the student's capacity to reach them. The challenge to the wise mentor, accordingly, is to establish a learning *context* that assures students that they will neither be judged nor be treated stereotypically. Beyond invoking high standards, and assuring students of their

capacity to reach those standards, other strategies may prove effective in the classroom, business, or playing field contexts outside the narrow confines of the psychology laboratory. The effectiveness of each strategy derives, at least in part, from its ability to lift the situational threat of stigmatization. Students are thus free to trust their teachers and to safely invest their effort, and their identity, in school.

Providing Sufficient Support

Wise educators and interventions succeed not simply by imposing high standards and assuring students of their capacity to reach them. They also provide the resources and guidance—in the form of teacher feedback, student services, and tutoring opportunities—that students need to attain the level of performance demanded. Selective colleges, for example, offer more generous financial aid programs, generally provide smaller classes with more personal attention, and supply more counseling and support services than do less well-endowed institutions. Such colleges yield graduation rates nearly twice the national average, and produce students who go on to earn salaries almost 70% greater than those of their peers who attend less selective schools; in fact, 10 to 50% of the advantage of attending a well-endowed, selective college remains even after student socioeconomic status, SAT scores, high school grades, and gender are statistically controlled (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Furthermore, attendance at elite schools appears to confer greater benefit to black students than to white students (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Even students who enter such schools with fewer academic credentials than their peers, for example, those admitted under affirmative action or through athletic scholarships, on average achieve superior graduation rates, earn higher salaries, and even become more civically involved than do similarly qualified peers who attend less competitive schools. (Bowen & Bok, 1998).

Cultivating Relationships

Criticism delivered in the context of a trusting relationship, where recipients can effortlessly attribute such feedback to benevolent intentions, may not require explicit assurances or evocations of standards to prove beneficial. Outside such a relationship, it seems, minority students may reasonably view academic authorities with mistrust. But as they develop a close relationship with a teacher or mentor, they may come to view racial bias as an increasingly implausible explanation for the treatment they receive, at least in the context of that specific relationship (see also Slavin & Cooper, 1999). Indeed, stereotype-based suspicions exert far less influence on judgment once people have gathered even minimally diagnostic information about another person (e.g., Locksley, Borgida, Brekke, & Hepburn, 1980). The messages of respect and regard that at first must be made explicit may thus become implicit in the

context of a trusting relationship. The mentor's continuing support and demonstrated concern, that is, can communicate that the student is accepted and viewed as capable.

Conveying a Message of Personal Concern

It is likely that the rigor of the feedback featured in our own studies communicated the critic's *interest* in helping the student to reach the higher standard (Cohen et al., 1999). Many students in our own studies remarked in the post-experimental debriefing session that they had felt impressed by the attentiveness of the criticism, and that seldom in their undergraduate careers had a teacher or professor taken their efforts so seriously. In fact, students who face negative stereotypes may feel particularly uncertain about whether their mentors, teachers, and even academic institutions support and care about the welfare of students from their gender or racial group. Detailed critical feedback, at least when accompanied by personal assurance and evidence of high standards, may help to resolve this uncertainty.

Beyond communicating high standards and a belief in the student's capacity for success, the mentor may thus be obliged to convey, implicitly or perhaps even explicitly, a personal concern for the student. While this notion is consistent with our theoretical analysis, it also resonates with research examining the factors that distinguish effective intervention programs from ineffective ones (Comer, 1988, 1997; Schorr, 1997). According to one recent review, it is an ethos of care and commitment that is essential. In fact, "[I]n their responsiveness and willingness to hang in there, effective programs are more like families than bureaucracies" (Schorr, 1997). Effective teachers are likely to take similar steps to communicate a personal interest in their students, often an interest that goes beyond scholastic concerns. For example, the ability of teachers to connect with the lives of students *outside* of school appears critical to the success of several academic intervention programs (see Schorr, 1997). Indeed, strategies as simple as providing opportunities for high-risk youth to develop caring relationships with peers, teachers, and role models in the context of extracurricular activities dramatically reduce rates both of high school dropout and of criminal arrest (Mahoney, 2000).

Cross-cultural research on Japanese preschool and elementary education offers a similar lesson. According to one comprehensive ethnography, the Japanese place importance on the development and maintenance of caring relationships between teachers and children, an emphasis that arguably accounts for their superior achievement on international tests of science and mathematics (Lewis, 1995). Through the cultivation of close relationships, Japanese students come to view school "as a place that has their best interests at heart," and they thus feel motivated to persist even when faced with challenging work (Lewis, 1995).

Managing Attributions

Small features of the situation can override the effects of race or gender on students' expectations and attributions. In our research, the invocation of high standards led black students to attribute the criticism to the reviewer's demands for excellence rather than to personal or group animus. Even simpler attributional strategies may also prove effective. Presenting the evaluator as motivated by self-interest can, surprisingly, help to deflect attributions of bias. In one study, for example, black students' reluctance to trust a white evaluator's feedback was eliminated when they were told that the evaluator would win money if participants excelled at the task (Banks et al., 1977). Because they knew that their evaluator had a stake in their performance, participants could feel certain that the feedback was fair and objective. Of course, we do not suggest that mentors let self-interest motivate their actions. Our point is merely that simple interventions can ward off counterproductive attributions.

Other attributional strategies are suggested by observations of expert tutors. Rather than cater to the presumed deficiencies of at-risk children with an abundance of positive feedback, such tutors present the work in a manner that forestalls destructive attributions on the part of the student (Lepper, Aspinwall, & Mumme, 1990, see also Lepper & Woolverton, Chapter 7 in this volume). They might, for example, describe a problem as particularly difficult so that the student can readily attribute frustration to the demands of the work rather than to a personal limitation (Lepper et al., 1990). Expert tutors wisely use attributional techniques to keep the child optimistic in the face of challenge (Lepper et al., 1990). They are thus able to produce gains in student achievement of up to two standard deviations, more than twice the effect size of any other conventional educational intervention (Bloom, 1984; Walberg, 1984).

Framing Ability as Malleable Rather Than Fixed

Much of the effectiveness of the wise intervention used in our own feedback studies may lie in the message that it conveys about the malleable nature of ability—the message that abilities are enhanced through practice and effort, and that more practice and greater effort will yield performance that surpasses the capacities demonstrated to date (Dweck et al., 1995; see also Dweck, Chapter 3 in this volume). The malleability message should prove particularly important for students who are targets of ability-stigmatizing stereotypes, because these stereotypes are accompanied by the implicit assumption or even explicit claim that ability (or lack of ability) is a fixed group limitation rather than a malleable aspect of the self (Aronson, Chapter 14 in this volume; Cohen et al., 1999).

At least one intervention specifically illustrated the possibility of raising black students' GPA by leading them to view intelligence as expandable (Aronson, Chapter 14 in this volume). More generally, the guiding philosophy

of many of the most successful programs aimed at minority youth is an emphasis on the malleable nature of academic ability—the message that “Intelligence can be taught” (Whimbey, 1975). Effective educators and academic programs convey an unflagging faith in their students’ *potential*. But, like our wise criticism, they do not hesitate to call attention to the gap between students’ current performance and the level they could achieve with unstinting effort.

Increasing Diversity

Increasing the representation of historically excluded racial or gender groups, it seems obvious, should also help to counteract the effects of stigmatization. Students are apt to trust that same-race educators will not use the stereotype against them. Indeed, one ethnographic study found that graduate students of color derive great benefit by working with African American mentors who can help them to negotiate the trials and challenges of being a minority in academia (Antony & Taylor, in press). The benefits of diversity are further underscored by experimental evidence that being a token minority, or simply a solitary group member, can activate concerns about being judged stereotypically and thereby cause motivation and performance to suffer (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000; see also Stangor et al., 1998).

But increasing diversity alone may not automatically help minority students. For example, research suggests that inner-city black students do not necessarily achieve higher test scores when working with same-race teachers (Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987; Ferguson, 1998). Rather, they perform better with black teachers of *low* socioeconomic status and worse with black teachers of *high* socioeconomic status (see Ferguson, 1998). It is possible that even minority teachers may be perceived as potentially biased beneficiaries of a white system, inasmuch as high socioeconomic status serves as cue that a given minority teacher is more “white” than “black.” Poignantly, minority teachers may thus face a double barrier of mistrust. Minority students may wonder if they have sold out to a white system. Moreover, nonminority students may doubt their expertise and thus question the validity of the criticism they provide (Sinclair & Kunda, 1999). Nevertheless, many minority teachers surmount such barriers, and examining the strategies they use constitutes a fruitful topic for future research (see Antony & Taylor, in press).

We also think that mentors and students alike can derive great benefit not only by working *within* racial and gender lines, but also by working *across* them. Clearly, individuals are apt to learn new perspectives by establishing working relationships with members of different ethnic and gender groups. Furthermore, cross-race and cross-gender mentoring can offer unique *motivational* benefits to students. The power of the wise intervention used in our research, for example, might rest in its affirmation of respect despite racial difference. The white reviewer may have been perceived as reaching out across the racial divide—as a person willing to provide honest and validating treatment despite

his group's reputation for prejudice. Such a gesture may allay doubts on the part of minority students about whether academic authorities in a predominantly white institution care about the welfare of their ethnic group. In addition, receiving respectful help from someone who is different or dissimilar can confer benefits to self-esteem, inasmuch as the recipient attributes the assistance to the uniquely kind motives of the person who provides it or to the uniquely special merit of his or her own performance (see Fisher & Nadler, 1974).

Promulgating a Positive Ideology

The potential for mistrust may also be attenuated when feedback is interpreted in light of a shared ideology or value system. For example, the usual effect of race and socioeconomic status on student achievement may vanish in certain liberal Catholic schools (Bryk, 1993; Bryk & Schneider, 1996). These religious institutions succeed, it seems, by creating a shared and inspirational ideology (Bryk, 1993). Practitioners in such schools stress the fundamental worth of every individual, and emphasize the importance of ethical treatment in even the most mundane interactions. These values are woven into the school curriculum, and their effect is to establish "organic trust" (Gambetta, 1990). Students come to trust their educators because of shared assumptions about mutual benevolence and regard.

CONCLUSION

Educators who work across racial or gender lines must communicate that they are not biased, despite the potential for prejudice that exists in the larger system. The strategies reviewed here may help teachers, managers, and tutors to accomplish just this. But even if students feel convinced that they personally are accorded respect, they may still face the threat that *other* members of their ethnic or gender group could be judged or treated stereotypically. With our colleague Julio Garcia, we have documented a phenomenon called "collective threat," and it refers to the shame, embarrassment, and doubt an individual feels in situations where the reputation of his or her group might be damaged. As such, collective threat can be elicited not only by one's own actions, but by those of fellow group members who could also confirm a negative stereotype about one's group.

African-American students in one study simply observed a black student who appeared likely to flunk an intelligence test and thereby substantiate a racial stereotype. Compared with their black peers who did not witness this event, subjects showed many of the symptoms of stigmatization, including a large drop in self-esteem. The situation caused distress not because it posed a specific threat to subjects' sense of personal worth based on their own performance. Rather, the situation imperiled their self-worth due to its impli-

cations for the larger representation of their racial group. Intervention programs may thus need to assure students that respect is granted not only to them personally but to members of their *group* more generally.

The present chapter focused on minority students, but we believe that the theoretical framework offered here applies to any individuals who fear that their abilities or worth is doubted rather than assumed. The threat of stigmatization may be felt by whites in the arena of competitive sports, where their group is stereotyped as lacking ability (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999), by students plagued with low self-esteem (Brockner, 1979; Brockner & Hulton, 1978), by children from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Croizet & Clair, 1998), by people making the transition to a more rigorous school or job (Simmons et al., 1991), and so on. In each case, people may question whether others view them with respect, and their motivation and performance may thus falter.

Perhaps it would have been equally useful to have focused much of our analysis not on stereotyped students performing in the classroom, but on *nonstereotyped* students (cf. Miller, Taylor, & Buck, 1991). In our own work, for example, we were surprised to find that nonstereotyped students responded to the criticism in an equally favorable manner regardless of whether it was accompanied by a personal assurance or not. For them, it seems, such assurances are *implicit*. At least among the highly select populations used in our own research, nonstereotyped students may thus enjoy a social-psychological advantage. They navigate the demands of the classroom equipped with trust. They can feel assured that neither their personal worth nor the worth of their group is automatically subject to doubt. Our attention is thus turned from stigma to privilege. Exploring both concepts, and their implications for mentoring and other teacher-student relationships, constitutes a central challenge for educators and researchers alike, as is using such relationships to cultivate the fertile ground of trust.

Teachers' Questions and Answers

Q: I find your research on trust very compelling. At the same time, I wonder if you have any research or ideas on how I could facilitate this kind of trust-building dynamic in a classroom full of 30 or so kids, rather than the one-on-one situation you used to test your theory.

A: While we have not investigated this issue empirically, it is a very interesting question worthy of further research. We suggest, however, that many of the intervention strategies we describe in this chapter could be applied in a classroom context. For example, teachers could emphasize, at the beginning of the year, that they hold their entire class to high standards, and that they will help each student to reach those standards. In fact, it seems possible that some of the interventions we describe could prove more effective in a classroom context rather than less effective. For example, anecdotal

evidence suggests that many successful teachers instill in their students a sense of shared fate and common identity. Jaime Escalante, while holding his students to a high standard, also communicated to students that they would work *together* to reach that standard—indeed, that they would be unable to succeed without one another's help. [Several intervention programs, such as E. Aronson's jigsaw classroom (see Chapter 10 in this volume), also promote a spirit of cooperation.] Students in Escalante's class thus came to view one another as members of a team striving for a shared goal. Rather than merely mentioning his high standards and belief in students' potential, Escalante made his personal belief in the importance of scholastic success a publicly shared group norm. And, as much research in social psychology attests, group norms can be powerful determinants of behavior.

Q: Is there not also an identity problem for the teacher when kids misbehave? For example, urban teachers face twice the problems—academic *and* disciplinary. Since the inception of the zero tolerance policies in schools, I hear teachers ask "How am I supposed to handle discipline problems with minority children when their peers think I'm unfair to that minority group?" Doesn't this exacerbate the problem of a teacher then bending over backward not to look unfair, and the students mistrusting the classroom authority?

A: This is an important question, and only further research could do this issue the justice it deserves. We can only suggest that teachers can preserve trust, especially when they must make decisions unpopular among their students, by making the justification for their actions explicit rather than leaving it implicit. If the rules of good conduct are laid down in a clear manner, at the beginning of the school year, and if students can be encouraged to see the merit of those rules—indeed, perhaps they can even help to generate those rules—then they may be less likely to view disciplinary action on the part of their teachers with mistrust. Teachers could frame any punitive steps they must take as the necessary response to the rules of good conduct that the students themselves helped to establish.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Julio Garcia, Sarah Wert, Eric Uhlmann, Gregory Walton, and Joshua Aronson for their valuable comments and suggestions.

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