This chapter explores stereotype threat in organizational contexts. Building on the understanding that stereotype threat involves concerns about confirming a negative stereotype about one's group, we begin by elucidating the scope of potential stereotype threat effects in organizations. We first examine the ubiquity of evaluations in organizations, which are at the heart of stereotype threat. Next, we specify the potential psychological consequences of stereotype threat on targeted individuals within organizations, including weakening domain identification and engagement, reducing aspirations, increasing self-handicapping, and reducing openness to feedback. In the next section, we focus on specific performance consequences of stereotype threat in four domains: leadership, negotiations, entrepreneurship, and competitiveness. We follow by identifying the likely triggers of stereotype threat within organizations, including task difficulty, organizational structure, minority representation, and organizational culture. Finally, we identify three categories of strategies that organizations can implement to reduce stereotype threat: stereotype management, which includes acknowledging stereotypes, emphasizing positive stereotypes, and de-emphasizing negative stereotypes; hiring and training, which includes increasing minority representation and job training; and organizational culture, including both fostering identity safety and valuing effort.

**Keywords:** Stereotype threat, business, management, leadership, negotiations, workplace

The workplace is a breeding ground for stereotype threat. Whether receiving annual performance evaluations by bosses or periodic informal feedback from mentors, organizations are evaluation-intensive environments. As such, individuals from negatively stereotyped groups are often exposed to situations in which negative expectations may undermine performance. Although the bulk of stereotype threat research over the past 15 years has centered on academic contexts, in this chapter, we explore its implications in organizational settings.
Given that the workplace is inextricably linked with individuals' financial livelihood and lifetime achievement, understanding how stereotype threat affects work experiences is essential. Elucidating how stereotype threat is likely to creep into commonplace experiences on the job may provide organizations with fruitful directions for expanding diversity management training programs, which typically focus on bias from the perspective of the observer. Entire units of organizations are designed to monitor the fairness of evaluation processes, yet little systematic training is provided to employees to buffer them against the damaging effects of stereotype-based expectations. Because stereotype threat arises within the target of negatively stereotyped groups, understanding how the workplace is experienced by traditionally disadvantaged groups will enable organizations to manage diversity more completely, incorporating threats arising from multiple sources.

Another reason to examine closely stereotype threat in organizations is that huge racial and gender disparities in pay and advancement persist in virtually every industry in the United States. The statistics are staggering. Although women make up 46% of the U.S. labor force, they comprise just 3% of Fortune 500 CEOs and only 15.2% of Fortune 500 board seats (Catalyst, 2009). Likewise, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos make up fewer than 3% of Fortune 500 CEOs (Cole, 2008). Understanding how stereotype threat may contribute to these disparities is essential.

We organize this chapter into three sections. First, we define the potential scope of stereotype threat in organizations by exploring the ubiquity of evaluations. Second, we examine psychological and performance consequences of stereotype threat. Finally, we identify contextual factors likely to exacerbate versus mitigate stereotype threat within organizations.

1 THE SCOPE OF STEREOTYPE THREAT IN ORGANIZATIONS

The Ubiquity of Evaluations

Given that stereotype threat arises from concerns about confirming negative stereotypes, it is relevant in contexts in which individuals are evaluated, either by others or the self (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2003). Stereotypes derive their potency by anticipating the performance of individuals based on their membership in social groups. Steele and Aronson's (1995) original demonstration of stereotype threat relied on a diagnosticity manipulation purporting to measure and evaluate core abilities. Diagnostic conditions coupled with low expectations can trigger a variety of intrapsychic processes characterizing stereotype threat (Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008), including physiological stress, excessive performance monitoring, and suppression of negative thoughts and emotions. Because organizations frequently measure and evaluate performance, they are fertile grounds for stereotype threat.

In contrast to academic settings that emphasize learning as a valued outcome, many profit-oriented organizations focus on bottom line performance as the sole metric of success. Accordingly, organizations are particularly focused on
evaluating employees. Whether submitting job applications or being considered for promotion, inferences and evaluations are made regarding individuals’ abilities. Stereotype threat can steer targeted individuals away from seeking challenging jobs; for those who do apply and gain employment, stereotype threat can produce underperformance. Finally, stereotype threat can affect whether individuals persevere down a career path versus opt out of the workforce entirely. With the potential for stereotype threat to impact each successive career stage, its harm is potentially far-reaching.

Psychological Effects of Stereotype Threat in Organizations

Stereotype threat affects how much targeted group members care about excelling in stereotype-relevant domains. Somewhat ironically, high identification with a stereotyped domain can trigger stereotype threat (Steele, 1997; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002), and yet stereotype threat can reduce domain identification via a process of disengagement (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Major & Schmader, 1998). Disengagement, a psychological defense designed to insulate the self from evaluations, allows negatively stereotyped group members to avoid the possibility of confirming the stereotype (Steele et al., 2002). Low domain identification may ultimately depress career and performance goals.

An environment riddled with negative stereotypes may threaten targeted group members’ aspirations as future leaders. For example, exposure to television commercials depicting women in traditional roles led women to emphasize homemaking roles over achievement in describing their future lives (Geis, Brown, Jennings, & Porter, 1984). Similarly, Davies, Spencer, and Steele (2005) observed that women who viewed gender stereotypic television commercials were less likely to choose a leadership role in a subsequent task. Related to women’s relatively weak leadership aspirations, women report weaker entrepreneurial intentions than do men, particularly when masculine traits are subtly associated with leadership activities (Gupta, Turban, & Bhawe, 2008). Whether it be starting up new businesses or leading existing ones, women’s aspirations and intentions are weaker than those of their male counterparts, partly as a result of stereotype threat.

The pernicious effect of stereotype threat on aspirations extends more generally to women’s willingness to embrace challenges with uncertain success, an essential element of leadership in competitive business contexts. Niederle and Yestrumskas (2009) found that women and men who initially performed comparably on a cognitive task diverged in their subsequent preferences for engaging in a difficult version of the task that provided opportunities for greater rewards. Women’s aversion for risk and greater uncertainty about their ability led them to forgo challenges, thereby adopting lower aspirations.

Stereotype threat may also reduce aspirations via self-handicapping (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Rather than put forth effort and risk defeat, negatively stereotyped individuals may instigate alternate explanations for poor performance (Keller, 2002). Although self-handicapping is typically characterized as a defensive reaction
to negative stereotypes, it can also occur in the face of positive stereotypes, such as when men are expected to perform well in competitive tasks (Self, 1990). Regardless of the valence of the threatening stereotype, its very existence can lead targeted group members to introduce psychological excuses for their lack of success.

Stereotype threat can influence employees' willingness to seek feedback and, when unavoidable, their openness to it (Roberson, Deitch, Brief, & Block, 2003). Among African American managers, stereotype threat predicted indirect feedback seeking, or reliance on ambiguous cues to gauge performance. It can also lead to feedback discounting, whereby the accuracy of feedback and the motives of feedback providers is questioned. Individuals seek indirect feedback when the perceived costs of direct feedback are high (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992; Morrison & Bies, 1991). Because seeking and utilizing direct feedback is essential for improving work performance (Ashford & Tsui, 1991), avoiding this vulnerability-producing behavior may limit achievement over time.

Finally, stereotype threat may influence the degree of trust experienced by employees toward potential and actual employers. In one of the few studies examining stereotype threat among African Americans in organizational settings, Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlmann, and Crosby (2008) observed that advocating a color-blind policy (as opposed to explicitly valuing diversity) in a context in which minority visibility was low led African American managers to experience heightened distrust and discomfort with the organization. By creating bogus company brochures for display at a job fair, the researchers determined that the message organizations send concerning their views on diversity, including both subtle and blatant messages contained in websites and recruitment materials, may activate stereotype threat.

Eliminating gender- and race-based discrepancies in identification with leadership and its correlates is vital if leadership diversity in organizations is to be increased. Stereotype threat likely impacts both whether potential employees apply for jobs and whether existing employees fulfill their potential. Organizations frequently encourage employees to strive for excellence, and yet stereotype threat may lead negatively stereotyped groups to fail to see themselves as having "the right stuff." In organizations that revere the innate talent of their employees, individuals faced with increasingly complex and novel challenges as they move up the career ladder may fail to see themselves as having leadership potential, reduce career aspirations, and self-handicap as ways to reduce the threat of failure.

**Performance Effects of Stereotype Threat in Organizations**

Here, we examine the potential downstream consequences of stereotype threat on performance on organizational tasks. Because stereotype threat is relevant for any task in which certain social groups are believed to be more naturally adept than others, each of these domains has the potential for cultivating stereotype-based group differences.

We note up front that examinations of performance effects to date have been limited to studying the impact of gender stereotypes. Consistent with role congruity
theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), the communal aspect of the female stereotype is incompatible with the agentic behaviors associated with performance in many organizational tasks, thus setting the stage for stereotype threat to emerge. Whether it be leading or negotiating, stereotypically masculine traits such as assertiveness and rationality are commonly associated with high performers (Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001). Stereotypes suggesting men are more comfortable taking risks also gives them an advantage over women when it comes to entrepreneurial efforts to innovate and create new businesses (Baron, Markman, & Hirs, 2001). Finally, stereotypical expectations that women be relationally oriented may affect how they approach competition in general.

Perhaps the broadest individual performance domain relevant to organizations concerns leadership effectiveness. Common metrics of CEO leadership effectiveness include gains in market share and stock price, yet these measures are far removed from any specific behaviors of individual leaders and virtually impossible to study in the laboratory, where much of stereotype threat research occurs. As described above, stereotype threat researchers have primarily examined leadership efficacy and leadership intentions, which gauge individuals’ willingness and desire to assume leadership roles.

A notable exception to the study of leadership simply in terms of intentions and aspirations is work examining the moderating role of leadership efficacy, or self-assessed ability to lead (Bandura, 1997; Murphy, 1992). High leadership efficacy buffers women against stereotype threat (Hoyt, 2005). After hearing that effective leaders are masculine, women who were initially high in leadership efficacy actually strengthened their identification with the leadership domain; in contrast, women who initially reported low leadership efficacy reduced their identification with the leadership domain. Subsequently, Hoyt and Blascovich (2007) showed that the increased domain identification for high self-efficacy women translated into better performance, as measured by the effectiveness of advising and motivating employees on a simulated hiring committee.

Another performance domain in which stereotype threat occurs is negotiations. Negotiating is a decision-making process over the division of scarce resources between two or more interdependent parties. Effective leaders must be skilled negotiators (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2008), and studying negotiation in the laboratory has the advantage of being easily quantified, thus rendering clear measures of relative performance. To demonstrate that gender stereotypes can produce stereotype threat in negotiations, Kray and colleagues adapted Steele and Aronson’s (1995) manipulation of task diagnosticity prior to having mixed-sex negotiating dyads complete a buyer–seller simulation. Consistent with stereotype threat, women in the diagnostic condition achieved significantly worse outcomes than did their male counterparts; in the nondiagnostic condition, men and women performed comparably. Negotiators’ financial aspirations appear to be one mechanism driving this effect (Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002). Disidentification with the negotiation domain may also be a mechanism that reduces women’s propensity to initiate negotiations (Babcock, Gelfand, Small, & Stayn, 2006).
Although negotiations have an inherently competitive component that can clearly produce stereotype threat, the interdependent nature of negotiations makes it more difficult to determine whether women’s performance is affected only by activated stereotypes versus an effect driven by their counterparts or even by a dyadic-level phenomenon. To address this concern, we consider related research examining the debilitating effect of competitive payoff structures on women’s performance on individual cognitive tasks. Specifically, Gneezy, Niederle, and Rustichini (2003) had participants work on computerized mazes for pay under competitive versus noncompetitive payoff structures. In the noncompetitive condition, participants were paid a fixed amount for each maze they completed within the allotted time. In the competitive condition, only the top performer was compensated. Whereas no gender differences in performance were observed with the noncompetitive payment scheme, the competitive payment structure led women’s performance to drop significantly relative to men’s performance, which remained constant regardless of the level of competitiveness. In subsequent research, participants were given a choice of payment scheme (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007). Not surprisingly, men were significantly more likely to select competitive payments than women, despite the lack of a priori performance differences. To the degree that competitive environments are inherently threatening to women due to negative stereotypes about their ability to “hold their own,” women may reap fewer rewards than men.

In conclusion, the literature examining stereotype threat’s quantifiable effect on performance on organizational tasks is sparse. Virtually all of the existing research has examined gender as the social categorization triggering stereotype threat. The vast majority of work in this domain examines competitive performance interdependent decision-making tasks (i.e., negotiations) or individual-based cognitive tasks (i.e., mazes). All of the research reported above took place in laboratory settings with students rather than with employees of actual organizations. As a result of these limitations, stereotype threat’s impact on a wide array of organizational work is poorly understood, including sales and marketing effectiveness, accuracy in accounting and technical tasks, financial investing skill, and labor output. More generally, our understanding of how chronic exposure to stereotype threat impacts promotion rates and turnover within organizations is currently limited. Although the implications of stereotype threat for organizations are abundant and relatively straightforward, more empirical demonstrations of the multiple ways in which this phenomenon affects organizations is needed. As such, the next generation of stereotype threat research should take seriously the call to hold up a microscope to organizational settings with as much vigor as has already been applied to academic settings.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT: SITUATIONAL TRIGGERS OF STEREOTYPE THREAT

Whereas the previous section considered stereotype threat’s wide-ranging effects on individuals, in this section we identify and describe four situational characteristics
that may create “threats in the air,” including task difficulty, organizational structure, minority representation, and organizational culture.

**Task Difficulty**

The degree to which employees are adequately trained and prepared for the challenges they confront should predict whether stereotype threat occurs. Difficult tasks are both more likely to lead to stereotype threat, and are more affected by stereotype threat (Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Steele et al., 2002). Employees are expected and encouraged to take on complex tasks, especially as they climb the corporate ladder. As such, the connection between task difficulty and stereotype threat activation produces a challenge for organizations as negatively stereotyped group members assume greater responsibility.

**Organizational Structure**

Organizations vary in the degree to which clear status differences exist between individuals. We expect that rigid hierarchical structures may increase stereotype threat for individuals low on the “totem pole.” Just as low-status nonhuman primates experience heightened anxiety and stress (Barkow, 1975; Sapolsky, 2005), low-status members of organizations may be in a perpetual state of negativity. Because anxiety has been linked to stereotype threat (Ben-Zeev, Fein, & Inzlicht, 2005; Bosson, Haymovitz, & Pinel, 2004; O’Brien & Crandall, 2003), hierarchies themselves may produce stereotype threat effects for low-status members. Along these lines, Galinsky, Shirako, and Kray (2011) observed that low-power negotiators (i.e., job candidate relative to job recruiter, or buyer relative to seller) experienced performance drops in a negotiation framed as diagnostic of their abilities. Thus, occupying a position lacking in power and status may trigger stereotype threat—consistent effects, even when a consensually shared negative stereotype is absent.

**Minority Representation**

Recently, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg commented on the lack of gender diversity on the Court: “It’s almost like being back in law school in 1956, when there were nine of us in a class of over 500, so that meant most sections had just two women, and you felt that every eye was on you. Every time you went to answer a question, you were answering for your entire sex. It may not have been true, but certainly you felt that way. You were different and the object of curiosity” (Bazelon, 2009).

This quote captures many of the challenges inherent in being the sole minority member in a group context (Kanter, 1977). Low demographic diversity in organizations signals to negatively stereotyped individuals that the stereotype may be relevant and, in so doing, increases the perceived evaluation pressures on the individual. By heightening the salience of identity group membership, low demographic
diversity can also trigger stereotype threat (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003). Stereotype threat can also be triggered when negatively stereotyped group members represent a small numerical proportion of a professional organization (Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007).

We also consider the macro-level impact of minority representation on stereotype threat. In a multinational study, Guiso, Monte, Sapienza, and Zingales (2008) observed a negative correlation between the gender gap in math scores and women’s opportunities for advancement at the societal level. In other words, as women’s representation in political, educational, and economic activities of a given society increases, girls’ underperformance on standardized tests decreases. Although the correlational nature of this research leaves open the question of directionality, one interpretation is that the degree to which minority groups are adequately represented in the power structure is a key driver of performance.

**Organizational Culture**

Another contextual factor that may trigger stereotype threat is an organization’s culture. Broadly speaking, organizational culture is defined as “a system of shared values (defining what is important) and norms (defining appropriate attitudes and behaviors)” (Chatman & Cha, 2003, p. 21). Most research on stereotype threat in organizations has identified ways in which women experience its debilitating effects due to stereotypes suggesting women lack “the right stuff” to succeed in cut-throat industries. To this end, we would expect organizations and industries that cultivate rigid beliefs about innate talent underlying success would exacerbate stereotype threat. As expectations and evaluations become increasingly entwined, members of negatively stereotyped groups become more vulnerable to confirming negative expectations.

Along these lines, in a provocative *New Yorker* article, Gladwell (2002) argued that a pernicious “talent mindset” permeates American management orthodoxy. This mindset is characterized by a firmly held belief that putting the right people in place—defined by their impressive credentials and intellect—will guarantee an organization’s effortless success. He argues that this mindset leads managers to evaluate their employees’ performance on expectations rather than actual performance. Just like implicit beliefs suggesting individuals are born with a fixed set of abilities (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), organizations whose cultures are characterized by a fixed mindset may be particularly prone to eliciting stereotype threat.

**Sexist Attitudes**

The degree of sexism felt and expressed in organizations is another cultural characteristic that may promote stereotype threat. Dating at least as far back as the *Anne Hopkins v. Price Waterhouse Coopers* Supreme Court case, we have known that sexist attitudes can harm women’s career advancement (Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux,
Heilman, 1991). We now know that sexism can adversely affect women by lowering their objective performance. In an examination of women engineer's problem-solving abilities, merely being in the presence of men who held sexist attitudes caused women's performance to suffer (Logel, Walton, Spencer, Iserman, von Hippel, & Bell, 2009). Specifically, because sexist men tend to exhibit subtle cues (i.e., increased dominance, sexual interest) revealing negative attitudes toward women, women who interacted with sexist men performed worse on a standardized assessment of engineering ability. The sexism raised women's risk of being devalued and judged according to a negative stereotype. Attempting to suppress the negative stereotype taxed women's limited cognitive resources, thus producing stereotype threat. In addition, sexism can undermine women's performance by increasing the salience of other potentially threatening behavior (Kaiser, Vick, & Major, 2006).

**Policy Box**

Upon reviewing the literature on stereotype threat in organizations, several policy implications emerge. We note that stereotype threat is most likely to harm the career progress of the very same social groups whom organizational diversity programs typically devote large quantities of resources to recruit and retain. Very often, it is under-represented minorities for whom negative stereotypes are most salient, thus setting into motion a vicious cycle in which performance shortcomings thwart diversity goals. With this realization, a more comprehensive approach to managing stereotypes is needed. We propose the development and implementation of stereotype management programs, which involve: (a) communicating the power of stereotypes and developing employees' capacity to actively manage responses to stereotype activation in threatening performance domains, and (b) developing organizational programs designed to reduce the potential for stereotype threat activation. For the threatened individual, this process could involve consciousness-raising about the activation of stereotypes and training about deliberate self-focused techniques aimed at reducing the potential for stereotype threat to become triggered (such as emphasizing positive stereotypes and de-emphasizing negative stereotypes). Organizations could further minimize the prevalence of stereotype threat by reframing potentially threatening tasks and reducing emphasis on threatening social identities, focusing instead on shared identities such as membership in the organization. Organizations may also provide additional mentoring to those employees most vulnerable to stereotype threat and train managers and human resource specialists to monitor the organizational environment for the presence of "threats in the air."

**Organizational Interventions to Mitigate Stereotype Threat Effects**

We now consider the various steps that organizations can take to reduce stereotype threat. Each intervention aims to reduce the potency of negative stereotypes on targeted group members' performance on organizational tasks.
Stereotype Management

- **Acknowledging stereotypes.** By teaching stereotype threat and specifying how it may become activated, organizations can work to reduce its harmful effects (Johns, Schmader, & Martens, 2005). When negative stereotypes about one's social group are confronted directly, one counterintuitive response is *stereotype reactance*, or a pattern of behavior inconsistent with a negative stereotype. This performance-boosting response has been demonstrated both within the negotiations (Kray et al., 2001) and the entrepreneurship domains (Gupta et al., 2008) by women typically thought to be most vulnerable to stereotype threat. Presumably, directly acknowledging stereotypes helps individuals to question their validity, to understand better why they might experience anxiety or discomfort in certain situations, and possibly to increase the motivation to disprove them. Rather than demonstrating behavior assimilating the stereotype, explicitly activating the stereotype may produce contrast effects. Organizations may carefully consider ways of confronting stereotypes directly, setting the stage for stereotype reactance rather than stereotype threat.

- **Emphasizing positive stereotypes.** One mechanism for mitigating negative stereotypes' harmful effects is by raising awareness about positive stereotypes that may be relevant to a given task (Kray et al., 2002; Rydell, McConnell, & Beilock, 2009). For example, Kray and colleagues demonstrated that explicitly valuing stereotypically feminine traits, such as empathy and verbal communicativeness, led female negotiators to claim more of the bargaining pie than male negotiators. This pattern emerged under conditions typically designed to elicit stereotype threat—a negotiation framed as highly diagnostic of one's underlying abilities. Organizational leaders may reduce stereotype threat by actively managing and shaping the message employees hear about what personal characteristics contribute to task success. Additionally, training in stereotype management may include teaching specific techniques proven to reduce stereotype threat's impact. By teaching negatively stereotyped employees how to engage in self-affirmation, in which valued attributes about the self are actively considered, stereotype threat may be avoided (Martens, Johns, Greenberg, & Schimel, 2006).

- **De-emphasizing negative stereotypes.** Another tool for eliminating stereotype threat is to reduce the power of negative stereotypes by focusing on characteristics that transcend stereotype-relevant social identities. Just as cooperative behavior between groups is promoted via commonly shared identities or goals (Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Sherif, 1966), stereotypes lose their power to drive performance when shared identities are valued. Kray et al. (2001) completely eliminated gender differences in negotiation performance in a diagnostic negotiation after highlighting the power of career aspirations, education, and work experience in predicting negotiating success. Because these characteristics transcend gender, negotiators presumably entered the negotiation
without gender being a salient factor. In addition to eliminating differences in how men and women divided the pie, this approach also helped negotiators to create more joint resources. More recently, Rosenthal and Crisp (2006) demonstrated that, by emphasizing overlapping identities between the sexes, women’s career preferences become less stereotypically feminine, suggesting this approach may help women to achieve greater presence in the top echelon of organizations. Finally, disavowing personal characteristics strongly associated with negative stereotypes can insulate against stereotype threat (Pronin, Steele & Ross, 2004).

**Hiring and Training**

- *Increasing minority representation*. Organizations would also be wise to pay careful attention to the representation of minorities within the workplace. By explicitly stating that individuals from a diverse set of backgrounds are welcomed and valued, stereotype threat can be mitigated (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). The availability of role models from under-represented groups who provide examples of success can also reduce stereotype threat (Marx & Roman, 2002; Marx, Stapel, & Muller, 2005; McIntyre et al., 2005). One way for organizations to simultaneously increase minority representation and reduce stereotype threat is to adopt policies advancing diversity, as opposed to simple color-blindness (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). By prioritizing diversity, organizations are poised to increase minority representation and ensure that existing and potential minority group members are less vulnerable to stereotype threat.

- *Job training*. Given that a key moderator of stereotype threat is task difficulty, it seems logical that one way to mitigate its harmful effects is to provide proper training for the challenges they face. In so doing, heightened self-efficacy in the relevant domain may counteract the negative effects of stereotype threat (Hoyt, 2005). By investing in employees’ skills via comprehensive training programs, negatively stereotyped group members may feel more capable of exploring alternative career paths within an organization. At least in the context of negotiations, the availability of alternatives inoculates women negotiators against stereotype threat (Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004).

**Organizational Culture**

- *Fostering identity safety*. Simply providing assurances that one’s social identity will not be a determining factor for success on a task typically deemed to be stereotype-relevant may reduce stereotype threat. Davies and colleagues (2005) eradicated the notion that gender is relevant to leadership by explicitly assuring their participants that researchers have not observed gender differences in leadership ability. Even in the face of threatening images depicting
women in traditional roles, women high in identity safety strongly identified with the leadership domain.

- **Valuing effort.** An effective means of reducing stereotype threat may be to increase the emphasis placed on social identity-neutral traits, such as hard work and perseverance. Aronson, Fried, and Good (2002) demonstrated that endorsing incremental mindsets, which emphasize the connection between hard work and success, reduces stereotype threat relative to entity mindsets, which emphasize innate characteristics (such as gender or race) as predictors of success. Along similar lines, incremental mindsets improve negotiation performance relative to entity mindsets (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2007) and even provide a buffer against negative stereotypes about women’s negotiating effectiveness (Kray, Locke, & Haselhuhn, 2009).

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have reviewed and organized the literature examining stereotype threat in organizations. Upon reflection, we conclude that myriad opportunities exist for stereotype threat to exert pernicious effects on targeted individuals within organizations. Given the sheer ubiquity of evaluations within organizations focused on bottom-line performance, efforts to reduce stereotype threat will hinge on active efforts to manage stereotypes, diversify workforces, provide proper training to employees, and shape organizational cultures in ways that cultivate adaptive beliefs.

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