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College: CLASS

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Session 7: University Library - 15-2913
Time of Presentation: 3:15 PM

Presentation Type: Oral presentation

Project Title: Hidden Ways Social Class May Affect Potential For Success

Synopsis: The present study aims to examine the how poverty may affect English tests, specifically looking into potential stereotype threat caused by ones income.

Abstract:
Social class and stereotype threat are two topics not often associated with one another. Stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele 2001) is a self-evaluative threat that can be felt in any group with a negative stereotype. Because this threat can lead to gaps in achievement, feelings of inferiority, anxiety, and a self-fulfilling prophecy for the individual can explain differences we see among groups. For example, in Steele and Aronson's classic work, African American students and their White counterparts were placed in a difficult testing situation on English usage and literature. When placed in conditions of equality, both groups of individuals scored comparably. However, when placed under conditions of stereotype threat where African Americans in general were questioned for their English proficiency, the African American students scored significantly lower than their White counterparts.
The present study used the methodology of classic stereotype threat studies such as Steele and Aronson's (1995) study. Participants were given one of two introductions stimulating stereotype threat or not with respect to those from poor backgrounds. They were then given a series of GRE-type questions. We then informed students about stereotype threat and how any decrement in performance is due to this threat and not to their background.