

15th Annual Conference on Teaching & Learning

Tuesday, August 27, 2013 | 8:30 - Noon | Cartwright Center

Program Schedule

- 8:30 Coffee and socializing
- 8:45 Welcome and introductions
- 9:00 Keynote Address by Dr. Valerie Purdie-Vaughns, Columbia University
- 10:00 Break
- 10:15 Working session with Dr. Purdie-Vaughns
- 11:45 Follow-up activities during 2013-2014
- 12:00 Adjourn

About the Conference Achievement gaps are differences in academic performance between groups of students, based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and age. At all level of schooling, educators are concerned with how to reduce the gaps between groups. Although there are multiple reasons for achievement gaps, the conference will focus on the causes, consequences, and possible solutions for students' academic underperformance due to *stereotype threat*. As hundreds of studies have documented, individuals tend to underperform in situations where they fear that they may confirm a negative stereotype of a group to which they belong. In the classroom, stereotype threat can be triggered by comments or circumstances that remind a student of a negative stereotype about a group to which she or he belongs. Some examples of stereotype threat:

- Asked to indicate their gender at the beginning of a math test, female college students do more poorly than females who are not asked to indicate their gender.
- High-achieving white male college students do more poorly on a math test if they are told the test is used to determine why Asian students are superior in mathematics.
- Told that a test measures natural athletic ability, African-American males outperformed white males. Told that the test measures sports strategic intelligence, white males outperformed African-American males.
- Told that a test measures language ability, college students from a lower-class background perform more poorly than upper-class students.
- Older adults who read a newspaper account of how aging impairs memory did more poorly on a memory test than those who had not read the story.

The conference features guest speaker Dr. Valerie Purdie-Vaughns who studies the causes, consequences, and solutions to the negative effects of stereotype threat. Dr. Purdie-Vaughns' keynote address will explore how stereotype threat works, what conditions trigger stereotype threat and what types of interventions can reduce student underperformance due to stereotype threat. Following the keynote address, Dr. Purdie-Vaughns will lead a working session to answer questions and focus on specific strategies university faculty and staff can adopt to better understand and reduce achievement gaps caused by stereotype threat.

Keynote Address *Stereotype Threat and the Psychology of Achievement Gaps: Causes and Solutions to Student Underperformance* Valerie Purdie-Vaughns, Columbia University

This address uses the psychologist's toolbox to understand why certain schools and workplaces cause students to underperform relative to their potential and what interventions combat underperformance. Environments like work or school can trigger stereotype threat for students from under-represented groups – an added stress from the possibility of being seen through the lens of negative stereotypes, rather than being accepted equally as individuals. The cumulative toll of contending with such a threat, repeatedly and over long periods of time, can threaten students' sense that they can meet the demands of the environment. Performance and health can suffer as a consequence. This framework helps to explain intergroup disparities across a wide range of outcomes, including education (e.g., gender and racial achievement gaps) and health (e.g., racial health disparities) that have tended to be studied in isolation. This framework also provides concrete strategies for psychological interventions that target stress associated with stereotypes and bias. When well-timed and supported by environmental structures, these strategies help buffer students against the cumulative costs of stereotype threat.

Biographical Information: Valerie Purdie-Vaughns is Assistant Professor of Psychology at Columbia University. Previously she served on the faculty at Yale University. She graduated from Columbia University in 1993 and completed her doctorate at Stanford University in 2004 as a student of Dr. Claude Steele. Dr. Purdie-Vaughns is an expert on racial and gender achievement gaps in academic and workplace settings and how stigma undermines intellectual performance. She also conducts research on other forms of stigma including: stigma and LGBTQ groups, stigma of mental illness, and stigma based on multiple identities (intersectionality). Valerie has authored numerous publications that have appeared in journals such as *Science*, *Psychological Science*, and the *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*. She has been awarded grants from the National Science Foundation, W.T. Grant Foundation and the Department of Education. She is also a regular guest on National Public Radio (NPR) as a psychology consultant on *The Takeaway*. As a true believer in the power of psychology to effect social change she regularly consults with universities, corporations and federal agencies about how diversity works “on the ground.”