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# Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us And What We Can Do



**whistling vivaldi**

how stereotypes affect us  
and what we can do

CLAUDE M. STEELE



## Synopsis

The acclaimed social psychologist offers an insider's look at his research and groundbreaking findings on stereotypes and identity. Claude M. Steele, who has been called "one of the few great social psychologists," offers a vivid first-person account of the research that supports his groundbreaking conclusions on stereotypes and identity. He sheds new light on American social phenomena from racial and gender gaps in test scores to the belief in the superior athletic prowess of black men, and lays out a plan for mitigating these "stereotype threats" and reshaping American identities.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Written by an academic, focused mostly on students and the learning environment with experiments conducted mostly in schools and universities, I found it compelling but was hoping for more examples. Such as everyday life or in the business world.

Steele's work on stereotype threat is excellent! I have read and researched almost all of his work in academic journals. A few people recommended this book to me over the years, but I never thought to buy it because I was so familiar with his academic publications. However, this past summer, I decided to give a try for my self-imposed "summer reading". It was a good read and the departure from "academic writing" was nice. I didn't learn anything new, but enjoyed it nevertheless. If you are

familiar with Steele's work, you won't get anything new from it. But, if you are new to Steele's work, then this is an impressive, thought-provoking read. In my opinion, his research is necessary in understanding how stereotypes impact us in ways that most people may not realize..and, how people may be conveying stereotype without even realizing it (or intending to).

I had read some of this work piecemeal before (Dweck's mindset theories, stereotype threat) but this was the first time I saw it all put together in an engaging way that read more like autobiography in parts than pedantic research. It also gave a number of useful tips for reducing stereotype threat that I have already used in my classroom to great effect and others that I hope to use. I'd highly recommend for all educators and any interested in concrete ways of fighting more insidious forms of systemic oppression.

Very well written. It includes a lot of information on the various psychology studies that the author was involved in, which I found to be quite interesting. My one critique would be its highly repetitive nature. The author only makes a few points that he really drives home throughout the book.

Claude Steele's *Whistling Vivaldi* is an eye opening book that offers an in-depth look at the topic of stereotype threat, something that affects all of us in one way or another. Steele provides a straightforward depiction of stereotype threat, helping readers to understand a loaded topic and its impact, regardless of their previous knowledge of it. He uses personal accounts to illustrate how stereotype threat can develop, how it feels, and how it can affect individuals in various settings. Steele reminds us that divisions in our society are still present, whether they are related to race, gender, age, or any other characteristics that make us different from one another. Steele's use of personal accounts causes the reader to reflect on his/her own experience with stereotype threat and wonder how others might also be affected internally by stereotypes. Even though Steele is an expert on the subject, he does not place himself on a pedestal, and instead shares with us his own personal journey studying stereotypes. He does not alienate any specific groups or value one group's experience over another's, but instead discusses his research and its implications in a way that everyone can relate to. Steele not only offers his readers relatable, applicable research, but also goes on to discuss ways in which we can combat stereotype threat, especially in arenas like education. He leaves us feeling hopeful that change is possible. This book would be especially helpful to people working in the field of psychology, education, or any other field involving working with people! It is a reminder that even though our society has made some improvements over the

past few decades, we are still impacted by stereotypes and must educate ourselves in order to continue making changes for the greater good.

I purchased this book after it was suggested by a professor who lectured about the effects of stereotyping on students' mathematical abilities. It is true that words and inferences can hurt a student's self-esteem in terms of academic abilities. It is important that as teachers, parents, and other influential people in children's lives, that we make sure to watch what we say or infer when tutoring students in math or other subjects. It is an interesting book thus far.

This book candidly assists the reader in understanding the theory of Stereotype Threat that Steele and Aronson researched and brought to our attention a few years ago. Examples provided and details of more recent studies clarify how and why the 'threat' still exists and haunts the future of generations of young scholars daily. I highly recommend this book to educators, researchers, and advocates for equity and excellence in schools worldwide.

An intriguing book, pointing toward the ways in which broad societal expectations and notions of performance when personally internalized can undermine one's performance in self-fulfilling ways. One worry with this book is that it seems to suggest that everyone, all walks and backgrounds are potentially victims of debilitating stereotypes. While this might be a realization that would prompt people to sympathize with one another it also risks leveling what are obviously huge discrepancies in the intensity and dominance of some stereotypes over some sorts of people.

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