Defining Stereotype Threat

- Being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a stereotype about one’s group
- The degree that one of our social identities is highlighted for which there exists a stereotype in a domain, the higher the vulnerability to stereotype threat
- The way one of your identities is perceived interferes with your intellectual performance, loading the experience with self-consciousness and anxiety

“…places like classrooms, university campuses, standardized-testing rooms…though seemingly the same for everybody, are, in fact, different places for different people. Depending on their group identity, different people would simply have different things to contend with in these places—different stereotype threats, different ambiguities about how to interpret their experience, different goals and preoccupations.”

– Claude M. Steele, Whistling Vivaldi, p. 60

Strategies for Reducing Stereotype Threat

Which of the following strategies might you consider implementing, especially when forming groups and framing group dynamics? Which do you already use?

- Reframing the task: acknowledging the steps taken to make a task or test fair
- Deemphasizing threatened social identities: moving identity questions to the end of a test, or asking questions that highlight students’ valued identities to empower students to perform well
- Encouraging self-affirmation: having students actively acknowledge their valued characteristics and skills
- Emphasizing high standards with assurances of capability: providing transparency about learning objectives and assessments
- Providing role models: exposing students to role models who perform well in fields that typically invoke stereotype threat
- Providing external attributions for difficulty: helping students attribute anxieties to causes other than stereotype
- Emphasizing an incremental view of ability: promoting a growth mindset to overcome fixed notions of intelligence

 Adapted from Steve Stroessner and Catherine Good, http://www.reducingstereotypethreat.org/

Alexia Ferracuti, Ph.D. | a.ferracuti@northeastern.edu
Practicing a Pedagogy That Engages Diversity:
Applying Intercultural Pedagogical Principles to Classroom Facilitation

These intercultural pedagogical approaches support inclusive teaching and learning:

- Acknowledge anxiety and offer support
  - Be mindful of different thresholds of anxiety
  - Affirm students’ self-identity
  - Model tolerance for ambiguity

- Disrupt social relations in the classroom
  - Respond to triggers and biased comments
  - Challenge self-grouping habits
  - Facilitate purposeful small groups
  - Assign collaborative tasks

- Model the balance between suspending judgment and constructive critique
  - Recognize and invite diverse perspectives
  - Model the ability to verify comprehension before providing critique
  - When evaluating statements, distinguish between a belief and the person

- Facilitate conditions to support inclusive dialogue
  - Manage the stages of interaction
  - Welcome different styles of communication

Which of these just happened in our discussion?

Mark for yourself:

- one or more practices that you can commit to doing when engaging in whole-class discussion

- one or more practices that you already use

Implicit Bias & Microaggressions in the Classroom

“Open The Front Door” – a strategy for addressing microaggressions

O = Observe
• Offer concrete, objective, factual observations (not evaluative)
  “I noticed…”

T = Think
• Identify thoughts based on observations (yours and/or theirs without putting the other person on the defense)
  “I think…”

F = Feel
• Acknowledge actual feelings/emotions you have or believe others might have as a result of the observation
  “I feel…”
  “I imagine people experiencing that might feel…”

D = Desire
• Make specific request or inquiries about desired outcome
  “I would like…”

Adapted from: Souza, T.J. (2016). Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom: Concrete Strategies for Cooling Down Tension. In Faculty Focus Special Report: Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom. Magna Publication.

Alexia Ferracuti, Ph.D. | a.ferracuti@northeastern.edu
Implicit Bias & Microaggressions in the Classroom

Language prompts to further dialogue:

• I hear your point about…

• Am I correct in that you are saying…

• Help me understand what you mean by…

• How do others relate to that comment…

• I notice I’m feeling a little triggered and wondering if others are too…

• I appreciate the risk you took in saying…

• I know this topic isn’t easy, I appreciate you hanging in there during this discussion…

• Let’s all pause and write down our thoughts for a few minutes before we discuss this further…