

Whistling Vivaldi – Discussion Questions

1. I want to start our discussion today by asking you to think of a time when you may have experienced stereotype threat. What did you feel? How was your performance affected? What were the consequences of experiencing that threat?
2. Now pair with a group of three other people and share your insights. You may not want to share your personal story but think about how you have seen stereotype threat play out in your own life, among students you may know, or in your classroom.
3. As a group, determine one insight you'd like to share with the larger group about the text.
2. How does the idea of “contingencies” and social identity conflict with our vision of ourselves as fiercely individualistic?
4. How did this book change your perceptions of student’s underperformance? Esp particular groups of students?
 - How does the lens change when we think about student success from an actor’s perspective rather than from an observer’s perspective?
 - Why don’t “deficiencies” adequately explain underperformance among some groups of students?
5. What do you think about the idea that stereotype threat has stronger effects among students who are higher achievers?
6. Steele describes stereotype threat as “a snake loose in the house.” How does the diffuse nature of the threat affect students?
7. Do you have thoughts about things you could do specifically to help counter stereotype threat?
 - What does the book suggest about strategies for giving feedback?
 - What does the book suggest about group work?
8. Does this text make you rethink the way we approach diversity initiatives at the university?
 - How do the themes in this book contradict the “bootstrap” ideology?