TLC Weekly (14 November 2016)

Dear colleagues,

The good news is that your copies of Claude Steele’s *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do* have arrived and can be picked up in La Tour Maubourg (see Brenda).

As you’ll discover while reading, the book is a first-person narrative of a remarkable series of research studies investigating “stereotype threat”, essentially that people know their performance can confirm a negative view of their group and of themselves as members of the group (e.g. one group can’t sprint, another is intellectually inferior, and yet another can’t do high-level math). The fear of confirming these negative views causes stress, which distracts and often results in weaker performance. Steele unravels the complexities of stereotype threats and guides us in thinking about how to create an environment that reduces threat, consequently reducing stress and distraction, building security and confidence, and supporting performance.

Below you’ll find a short review of the book from *The Harvard Educational Review*.

As you read the book, consider stereotype threats that our students (and ourselves) might be facing here at AUP and what we might be able to do. The TLC will begin organizing discussion sessions following the winter break. We’ll keep you posted!

Also, as a reminder, there will be no TLC lunch this week. The last one of the semester will be the following Tuesday, Nov. 22.

A good week to all,

Rebekah

The *Harvard Educational Review* reviews the book, *Whistling Vivaldi: And other clues to how stereotypes affect us* by Claude M. Steele (2010) (slight title change since the first print run in 2010):

“The author helps us find answers to these questions based on findings from social psychology experiments. Steele’s book sets forth an argument for understanding how contextual factors—not individual characteristics or personal beliefs motivated by prejudice or malice—help explain so-termed ‘racial achievement gaps’ in education and ongoing societal racial and ethnic segregation. The author summarizes research findings that show how the concerns students face as a result of these stereotype threats affect a wide range of educational outcomes. He explains how the threat of a stereotype and the extra efforts required of students who try to dispel it interfere with academic performance. In the later chapters of the book, Steele focuses on how identity threats influence interracial interactions more broadly. He explains how our actions, conscious or not, contribute to persistent racial segregation as, understandably, each of us may retreat to the safety of a more homogeneous environment that does not trigger the risk of a stereotype threat. The findings presented in this book unearth the powerful and prevalent ways in which group identity affects us all and demonstrate the need to acknowledge this fact: we need to be ‘identity conscious’ if we are going to improve race relations across our society” (*Harvard Educational Review, Vol* 80(3), 2010, 427-428. PsycINFO, 2016 APA).