CRMSE Colloquium Announcement

How peer role models protect women’s math test performance under threat

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1:00-2:00 pm
6475 Alvarado Road, Suite 128

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Abstract: According to theory and research on stereotype threat (Spence, Steele, & Quinn, 1999; Steele, 1997) women underperform on challenging math tests, in part, because they are worried about being viewed in terms of the negative group-based stereotype alleging their mathematical inferiority (i.e., “women are bad at math”). Given this predicament, I will discuss research on a peer role model intervention designed to offset the negative effects of stereotype threat on women’s math test performance. In the first part of my talk I will provide evidence for the basic role model effect as well as detail some of the boundary conditions of the effect. In the next part of my talk I will discuss a set of experiments that extends the peer role model effect: These experiments demonstrate that male peers can serve as effective role models to the same degree as female peers provided that the male peers are not viewed as threatening or potentially judgmental. I conclude my talk with some thoughts about how best to utilize the power of peer role models in real world math classrooms.