

Carol Dweck

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Stanford University

James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award

As one of the world's leading researchers in the field of motivation, Carol Dweck's work bridges developmental, social, and personality psychology, and examines the mindsets people use to guide their behavior. Her work has demonstrated the role of mindsets in people's motivation and has shown how praise for intelligence can undermine motivation and learning.

Dweck's empirical work has revealed that when we see ourselves as possessing fixed attributes (the fixed mindset), we blind ourselves to our potential for growth and prematurely give up on engaging in constructive, self-improving behaviors. In contrast, seeing the self as a developmental work in progress (the growth mindset) can lead to the acquisition of new skills and capabilities. Importantly, Dweck has studied the developmental roots of these mindsets.

This theoretical framework has been used to address a variety of societal concerns, such as achievement gaps between ethnic or gender groups. Dweck finds that victims of negative stereotypes who have (or are taught to adopt) a growth mindset then take a mastery-oriented stance to achieve their goals even in unfavorable learning environments. As a result they can excel despite the obstacles they face.

The impact of Dweck's work has spread to other domains besides academic achievement, including willpower, conflict resolution in the Middle East, racial prejudice, and adolescent aggression. Her rigorous research has been applied extensively in schools and organizations to empower children and adults around the world.