

Professor Carol S. DWECK

Citation

“In our DNA” has become a hugely popular way to categorize the identity or nature of people, companies, and even products: encoded, predetermined, and permanent. To Prof. Carol S. DWECK, the danger lies in associating DNA with destiny when it comes to how we think about talent and achievement.

As the formulator of the “growth mindset”, the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University has put forward an alternative concept centered on elasticity in personal and intellectual abilities. From ground-breaking academic publications and a 2006 popular science book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* – translated into 25 languages, and still a best-seller – to her on-going research and advocacy, she has challenged our implicit views of what it means to succeed. In doing so, she has revolutionized theories on personality, motivation and development over the past 40 years and seen her approach take root globally in fields from education and business management to sport.

Through systematic research and experiments, Prof. Dweck found two major self-conceptions at work in children and adults. Those who viewed intelligence as innately determined and fixed often gave up quickly or took avoidance actions when faced with obstacles. Why? Their “fixed mindset” registered failure as a lack of ability and a dreaded challenge to their self-esteem. By contrast, those

who believed intelligence could be developed, viewed failure as a route to learning, and were more willing to test themselves in novel settings. They showed greater persistence and effort, and attained more positive outcomes. Equally significant, from the hundreds of studies with thousands of people conducted by Prof. Dweck, her students, and colleagues, it was shown that a “growth mindset” could itself be developed and expanded by educational strategies and input from parents, teachers, work supervisors, and others.

It seems fitting that such insight began with a metamorphic occurrence. As a sixth-grade school student in the US in the 1950s, Prof. Dweck’s form teacher arranged her class of high-achievers in order of IQ. She also rewarded those with high scores by allocating them classroom responsibilities, such as cleaning the blackboard. The young Carol was placed in row one, number one. However, rather than instilling a lasting fixed mindset from such emphasis on intelligence, in her case it ultimately proved a “growth” turning point in her interest in the links between mindsets, IQ, and achievement.

Undertaking her bachelor degree in psychology at Barnard College, a liberal arts school in New York, amid the hope and empowerment of the mid-1960s led to further mind stretching. President John Kennedy’s assassination, Martin Luther

King's drive for civil rights, the Vietnam War, Betty Friedan and feminism, and the emergence of pop culture icon Bob Dylan were among the events having a transformational social impact. By the end of her undergraduate years, she "wasn't afraid to open new doors... and step through those doors". She graduated in 1967 and attained her PhD at Yale University in 1972. Research and teaching at the University of Illinois, Harvard, and Columbia followed, ahead of her current role at Stanford.

Prof. Dweck's life-changing body of work has now generated 90,000 citations, according to Google Scholar. Her research has been included in the World Development Report 2015 and the World Bank's Global Insights Initiative has recommended its use. Companies have sought out Prof. Dweck to examine the dynamics of organizational mindsets and her TEDx talk, posted online in 2014, has been viewed over eight million times. In Hong Kong, the English Schools Foundation has adopted the growth mindset as part of their pedagogical philosophy. At HKUST, the School of Business and Management has recently introduced such insights to all freshmen and researchers at the School are further exploring this area.

Recognized by her peers, Prof. Dweck is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, US National Academy of Sciences, and is the recipient of 10 lifetime achievement awards. Last year, she became one of two inaugural laureates of the prestigious US\$3.9 million Yidan Prize for Education Research, based in Hong Kong and founded by Tencent core founder Charles Chen Yidan. The judging panel was headed by HKUST's President Emeritus Prof. Paul Chu.

So next time someone says "not yet" rather than "you failed" or praises effort rather than intelligence, you will know why. Indeed, it may be you uttering this or tackling a difficult challenge with relish. Exactly the reason why we celebrate today the endeavor, persistence, and dedication of Prof. Dweck in opening up a global pathway to unlock fuller potential and achievement.

Council Chairman, on behalf of the Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, I have the high honor of presenting to you, Prof. Carol S. Dweck, Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, for the award of Doctor of Business Administration *honoris causa*.