

Psych 273 – Changing Mindsets and Contexts: How to Create Authentic, Lasting Improvement

Instructor:	Carol Dweck and Greg Walton Email: dweck@stanford.edu and gwalton@stanford.edu
Website/Forum:	On Canvas
Class meets:	Thursdays 2:30-3:50 On Zoom, meeting password: 897689
Grading:	Letter grades or credit/no credit
Enrollment:	Capped at 12 graduate students in psychology.

Many wise interventions offer people new beliefs but have not addressed the contexts in which those beliefs will be situated and implemented. This can limit the interventions' effectiveness. In this course, we will explore how combining mindset change with consideration of, or change to, the setting can enhance the authenticity of the intervention and the duration of its effects. Topics will include contextual boundary conditions on direct-to-student treatments, the nature of contextual "affordances," and the creation of contextual affordances.

Many past meta-analyses and replication attempts have attempted to render a yes-no verdict on interventions. Yet no intervention could possibly work everywhere. The study of context puts "replication" in a new light, by asking when and where questions, rather than all or nothing yes-no questions.

This class is based on student discussion and leadership. We look forward to a high level of involvement from all students. We would like students to:

1. Attend all sessions, having done the readings and being ready to discuss them.
2. Co-lead a session. This involves helping to moderate it, but also preparing a short opening that addresses how the readings speak to the nature and workings of the self how it intersects with the context, or the target of the intervention in question. **Please do not:**
 - * Summarize the readings
 - * Critique the details of a paper (we can do that in discussion)
 - * Use PowerPoint

You could:

- * Discuss the target of the intervention and the authors' understanding of it
- * Present background on the research
- * Describe other papers that complement or contrast with the assigned readings

The goal is for you to bring to the table findings and perspectives your peers may not know about; therefore this should entail some research on your part.

3. Post a short paper on Canvas by May 24. This 5 page (or more) paper should take off from the readings and our discussion to describe, in general terms, a research project that

would explore the intersection of psychology and contexts. Please address these questions explicitly:

- What is a specific psychologically important aspect of a context that you will focus on?
- Why does it matter for people in that context?
- How could it be changed, if desirable? And/Or: What implication does it have for direct-to-person interventions?

All seminar members will read and discuss your paper.

Reading Schedule

Week 1 – April 1: Introduction (No reading)

Week 2 – April 8: Contexts as Sources of Psychology: How Contexts Can Communicate What People Should Think About Themselves or Whether They Can Belong and Succeed

- Canning, Muenks, Green, & Murphy (2019). STEM faculty who believe ability is fixed have larger racial achievement gaps and inspire less student motivation in their classes. *Science Advances*
- Mueller & Dweck (1998). Praise for intelligence can undermine children's motivation and performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Student Co-Lead:

Week 3 – April 15: Contexts as Constraints on Person-Directed Interventions: Why Interventions May or May Not Work Because of Factors in the Context

- Walton, G. M. & Yeager, D. S. (2020). Seed and soil: Psychological affordances in contexts help to explain where wise interventions succeed or fail. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*
- Yeager et al. (2021). Teacher mindsets help explain where a growth mindset intervention does and doesn't work. Under review.

Student Co-Lead:

Week 4 – April 22: Institutional Structures and Their Intersection With Psychological Processes Over Time

- Goyer et al. (2021). The role of psychological factors and institutional channels in predicting the attainment of postsecondary goals. *Developmental Psychology*.
- Wu et al. (2021). A meta-analysis of the effect of values affirmation on academic achievement. *Journal of Social Issues*.

Student Co-Lead:

Week 5 – April 29: Peer Contexts

- Dennehy & Dasgupta (2017). Female peer mentors early in college increase women's positive academic experiences and retention in engineering. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.
- Muragishi et al. (2021). Microinclusions: Treating women as respected work partners increases a sense of fit in technology companies and quantitative performance. Under review.

Student Co-Lead:

Week 6 – May 6: Changing Peer Contexts

- Paluck et al. (2016). Changing climates of conflict: A social network experiment in 56 schools. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.
- Powers et al. (2016). Changing environments by changing individuals: The emergent effects of psychological intervention. *Psychological Science*.

Student Co-Lead:

Week 7 – May 13: Top-Down Influences on Contexts

- Canning et al. (2020). Cultures of genius at work: Organizational mindsets predict cultural norms, trust, and commitment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.
- Hook et al., (2021). Social norms govern what behaviors come to mind—and what do not. Under review.

Student Co-Lead:

Week 8 – May 20: Changing Top-Down Influences on Contexts

- Turnwald et al. (2019). Increasing vegetable intake by emphasizing tasty and enjoyable attributes: A randomized controlled multi-site intervention for taste-focused labeling. *Psychological Science*.
- Walton et al. (2021). Lifting the bar: A relationship-orienting intervention reduces recidivism among children reentering school from juvenile detention. Under review.

Student Co-Lead:

Week 9 – May 27: Paper Discussion 1

Week 10 – June 3: Paper Discussion 2