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UNIVERSITY

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*Mindsets in Context: Exploring Mindsets in  
Educational and Organizational Settings*

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The cues hypothesis, a central tenant of the contextual approach to social identity threat, posits that subtle situational cues can trigger threat, even in the absence of overt prejudice or discrimination. The present research uses the cues hypothesis to investigate the psychological, motivational, and performance effects of several situational cues for women in STEM settings. Specifically, in an experiment and a longitudinal, experience-sampling study, we examine how students' perceptions of college instructors' mindsets shape women's experiences in STEM. Moreover, we explore how this cue interacts with others in the local environment to influence women's sense of belonging, interpersonal concerns, and performance in STEM. Experimental data demonstrate that "experts" with fixed mindsets inhibit women's STEM performance, particularly in contexts in which they form a minority. Data from the longitudinal study reveal that when women perceive their STEM professors to have a fixed mindset, it engenders identity threat in the classroom, and ultimately leads to reduced commitment to STEM fields over time. Results underscore the importance of examining the meaning that people draw from multiple situational cues to better understand the psychological experiences and outcomes of stigmatized individuals in mainstream settings.

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