OVERVIEW

- Background
  - Literature Review
  - Preliminary Study
- Dissertation Study
  - Intervention
  - Preliminary Findings
- Questions, Feedback, & Suggestions
**BACKGROUND**

- Literature Review

**HARSH/COERCIVE PARENTING PRACTICES**

- Harsh/coercive parenting practices (e.g., shouting, spanking, slapping) have been deemed “ineffective at best and harmful to children at worst” and are associated with an array of adverse outcomes (Gershoff, 2002, p. 136).

- Parental beliefs have been identified as having both direct and indirect effects on parental behaviors.
  - Milner’s (1993, 2003) social information processing model of child physical abuse asserts that certain types of parental beliefs (i.e., pre-existing schemata) influence the types of evaluations, interpretations, and attributions made by parents and may augment parental risk of employing harsh/coercive and abusive parenting behaviors.

- Implicit personality theories (IPTs), a type of pre-existing schemata, are the core beliefs an individual holds about whether the personality attributes of others are malleable (incremental mindset) or fixed (entity mindset) that subsequently guide individual perceptions, inferences, evaluations, and reactions, especially during aversive events and situations (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995).
While the relevance of implicit theories have been applied to the domains of shyness (Valentiner, Mounts, Drik & Grier-Lonsway, 2011), intelligence (Blackwell, Trzesniewski Dweck, 2007), personality (Erdley, Cain, Loomis, Dumas-Hines, & Dweck, 2007), and relationships (Rudolph, 2009), no research to date has explored the applicability of this theory to the parenting domain.

A preliminary study was conducted to advance our understanding of the relationships between IPT and parental cognitions and behaviors in response to child transgressions.
Hypotheses, Methods, & Results

High-entity theory parents, compared to low-entity theory parents, will…

- HI: Endorse more extreme trait ratings.
- H2: Attribute more hostile intent to the child.
- H3: Rate the child's behavior as more stable.
- H4: Attribute more cause for the transgression to the child's personality.
- H5: Feel more negative affect related to the child's behavior.
- H6: Be more likely to respond to the child using harsh parenting practices.
- H7: Be less likely to respond the child using inductive parenting practices.
- H8: Be more likely to predict that the child’s future behavior will be consistent over time.
- H9: Not differ in wrongness/seriousness ratings.
Implicit Theories of General Personality (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997)

- Eight items (4 entity and 4 incremental)
- Six-point likert scale ranging from 1 “Strongly Disagree” to 6 “Strongly Agree”
- Incremental theory items were reverse scored
- Internal consistency was good (Cronbach’s alpha, .93) and consistent with prior research using this measure (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997).

Sample items:
- The kind of person someone is, is something basic about them, and it can’t be changed very much.
- Everyone is a certain kind of person, and there is not much that they can do to really change that.
- People can do things differently, but the important parts of who they are can’t really be changed.
- Everyone, no matter who they are, can significantly change their basic characteristics.
- People can change even their more basic qualities.

Vignettes (Chilamkurti & Milner, 1993)

- Personal
  - Child went to school in wrinkled clothes.
  - Child wrote all over their hands with a pen.
- Conventional
  - Child refused to help you set the table for dinner.
  - Child watched TV past their bedtime after you told them to go to bed.
- Moral
  - Child threw stones at a dog.
  - Child took money from a family members wallet.

Sample questions following each vignette:
- To what extent do you think throwing stones at a dog indicates that this child is generally defiant?
- How wrong is throwing stones at a dog?
- How likely do you think this child threw stones at a dog because he/she was trying to be bad?
- Do you think this child threw stones at a dog because of the type of personality he/she has or because of situational factors?
- How would you feel if this child threw stones at a dog?
- In this situation, how likely is it that you would slap/hit/spank the child?
- Imagine what this child will be like five years from now. How likely is this child to be a trouble maker in the future?
PRELIMINARY STUDY: METHODS

- Other Measures
  - Demographics
  - Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAP; Milner, 1986)
    - Random Response Validity Index
- Procedure
  - Data collection via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk

PRELIMINARY STUDY: RESULTS

- Final sample: 187 parents retained
  - 58.3% were mothers
  - 79.5% Caucasian
  - Mean age 35.7 years ($SD = 9.7$)
  - 85.6% received at least some college education
  - 85.6% married or cohabitating, 8.0% single, and 4.8% divorced, separated, or widowed
  - No significant differences between low entity and high entity parents were observed on any of the demographic variables.
PRELIMINARY STUDY: RESULTS SUMMARY

- Parents who endorsed high levels of entity theory related to personality tended to:
  - Ascribe more negative traits to misbehaving children,
  - Interpret misbehaving children as possessing higher levels of hostile intent,
  - View child misbehaviors as indicative of the child’s personality,
  - More often select harsh parenting strategies in response to child misbehaviors,
  - Less likely to select inductive parenting strategies in response to child misbehaviors,
  - More likely to expect that a misbehaving child will exhibit behavior problems in the future.
- Consistent with prior research, parental mindsets related to personality were not significantly associated with wrongness ratings.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Findings from the preliminary study suggest that parental IPT beliefs may serve as pre-existing schemata that influence how parents interpret and respond to child transgressions.
- Interventions designed to alter IPT beliefs have been found to significantly impact how participants respond to the negative behaviors of others (e.g., Yeager et al., 2013).
- However, to date, no study has examined the impact of an IPT intervention on parents as they respond to child transgressions.

- Current Dissertation Study: A randomized controlled trial to assess whether an IPT intervention (modified to fit the parenting context) would alter how high entity IPT parents respond to child transgressions.
DISSERTATION STUDY

DISSERTATION STUDY DESIGN

1. Pre-screen Parent Participants
2. Randomly Assigned and Exposed to IPT Intervention or Control Condition
3. Completion of Measures (i.e., IPT measure, vignettes & questions, Voodoo doll, demographics)
**IMPLICIT THEORIES MEASURE**

- Implicit Theories measure of General Personality (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997)
  - Eight items (4 entity and 4 incremental)
  - Six-point likert scale ranging from 1 “Strongly Disagree” to 6 “Strongly Agree”

- Implicit Theories of General Personality sample items:
  - The kind of person someone is, is something basic about them, and it can’t be changed very much.
  - Everyone is a certain kind of person, and there is not much that they can do to really change that.
  - People can do things differently, but the important parts of who they are can’t really be changed.
  - Everyone, no matter who they are, can significantly change their basic characteristics.
  - People can change even their more basic qualities.

**DISSERTATION STUDY DESIGN**

- Pre-screen Parent Participants
- Randomly Assigned and Exposed to IPT Intervention or Control Condition
- Completion of Measures (i.e., IPT measure, vignettes & questions, Voodoo doll, demographics)
Implicit theory interventions have been found to have a significant and sustained impact on outcomes such as academic achievement (Aronson et al., 2002), negative adversarial attitudes and political tolerance (Levontin et al., 2013), shyness (Jerek & Valentiner, 2012), and hostile attributions and aggressive responses (Yeager et al., 2013).

Main intervention components include “stealthy but persuasive methods” and a writing activity (Yeager & Walton, 2011).

An implicit theory intervention for parents was developed for this study.
- Content of a previously used intervention was modified to the parenting context
- Focus groups and interviews
- Reviewed by team of implicit theories experts
- Feedback provided by DCFS Integrated Assessment team

Dissertation Study Design

Pre-screen Parent Participants → Randomly Assigned and Exposed to IPT Intervention or Control Condition → Completion of Measures (i.e., IPT measure, vignettes & questions, Voodoo doll, demographics)
VOODOO DOLL TASK

- All parents feel annoyed or angered by their children at times. We are interested in a time that your child made you angry.
- Where were you when your child made you angry? ______________________
- What did your child do that made you annoyed or angry?
- Thank you for sharing your story. Because thinking about a time when your child made you angry might be upsetting we want you to have a chance to get out any bad feelings before leaving.
- Below is a picture of an outline of a child. Imagine that the child below represents the child who you wrote about on the previous page. Attached are ten stickers you can use to harm the child. You can stick these onto the child to get out your bad feelings. You could think of this like sticking pins into a doll.

DISSERTATION STUDY

- Preliminary Findings
Current analysis includes 35 parents ($n = 18$ in control condition)
- 71.4% were mothers
- 54.3% African American
- Mean age 31.9 years ($SD = 9.8$)
- 45.7% received at least some college education
- 54.3% married or cohabitating, 45.7% single, and 8.6% divorced, separated, or widowed

Q: DID CONDITION EFFECT IPT SCORES?

$d = 2.05, \ p < .001$
Parenting is no a walk in the park. It takes time, effort, and patience to have successful parenting. The study stated that children learn so much between the ages 1 through 5 years old. Children look at us for examples of how to do things. You have to set positive examples for your children. Sometimes children may feel fussy and irritated when they can't express themselves properly. That's where your patience kicks in. It may be frustrating, but you have to maintain a mind set to be positive. You also have to reassure your child(ren) knows you are not mad, and that everything will be okay. Time, effort, love, and patience is key. Change can happen.

I think that anyone can change. No one is stuck in their ways that they can't change. As a mother of four and a single parent I sometimes face difficulties with my children especially my boy’s who's father's aren’t playing active roles in their lives. I had a lot of problems with my oldest son because he felt like his father didn’t love or care about him. But as his mother I had to assure him that no matter what I am always going to be there for him. Regardless who's in or out his life I wasn’t going anywhere and as long as he has my love and support that's all that he needs. As a result of telling him and showing him that I love and care for him he's had a major attitude and behavior change. So never give up people can and will change.

I totally believe in the Growth Mindset idea. I've always felt this way about people, children, and adults alike. That they can change. My youngest son is a handful to say the least. But the more patience, empathy, and persistence I put into showing him the correct way to do or handle things, I see great improvements. Sometimes my husband and I are at our ends trying to figure out why my youngest son is always hitting or spitting. And when you tell him not to do something you can see it in his eyes, that he just has to do it because you said not to. Now we talk to him and explain to him why we expect certain things from him and because we use patience, he understands better. Look back on your own life and notice how much you went through and how much it has changed your perception of things.

Being a parent can be extremely challenging. All of my life I wanted to be a parent and I knew it would be hard, but some days can also be rewarding. My children crave my love, attention, and affection constantly, but I often feel too busy or tire to give then the attention they desire. I do notice the sparkle in their eyes though when I change my mindset and just focus on them. It's like their whole demeanor changes. With a little bit of positivity and attention, my children do behave much better; so I need to change myself to get the desired behavior I crave.

It is no secret that people can change. It can be and has been proven that our behaviors stems from our environment and past experiences. As a mom of soon to be 8 year old, a full time masters candidate, along with other things that my daughter and I are involved in, this parenting thing can get pretty overwhelming. So I would be easily frustrated. I come from a stern background and that kind of play a role in how I parent. I figured I turned out fine and my daughter will too. But one thing that has helped along the way was changing my mindset and expectations. I had to steer clear of what I was used to a do what worked best for my daughter. Honestly, I get more and better results from her when I speak in an encouraging tone. Back when I was stern and straight forward with her although she still had and has great manners, me changing helped.
Q: DID CONDITION EFFECT PARENTAL ENDORSEMENT OF HARSH/COERCIVE PARENTING PRACTICES?

![Graph showing mean harsh practice ratings across personal, conventional, and moral transgression types for intervention and control conditions.]

- Intervention condition: $d = 0.23$, $p = .183$
- Control condition:

Q: DID CONDITION EFFECT PARENTAL PIN USAGE ON THE VOODOO DOLL TASK?

- Preliminary findings show a trend for condition to be associated with parents’ pin usage, $b = 0.79$, $p = .05$, RR = 2.20, 95% CI [.84, 5.72].
- Parents in the control condition used pins at a rate that was 2.20 times the rate of parents in the IPT intervention condition.
REFERENCES


HARSH/COERCIVE PARENTING PRACTICES

- Harsh/coercive parenting practices (e.g., shouting,spanking,slapping) have been deemed “ineffective at best and harmful to children at worst” (Gershoff, 2002, p. 136).
- Many medical and mental health organizations (e.g., American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2012) discourage use of harsh parenting practices due to their association with negative outcomes, including increased risk of:
  - parent-child relationship problems
  - child physical abuse
  - psychopathology
  - delinquent/criminal and aggressive behavior

IMPLICIT PERSONALITY THEORY (IPT) INTERVENTIONS

Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995
Statement of the Problem

- Findings from a preliminary study suggest that parental IPT beliefs may serve as pre-existing schemata that influence how parents interpret and respond to child transgressions.
- Interventions designed to alter IPT beliefs have been found to significantly impact how participants respond to the negative behaviors of others (e.g., Yeager et al., 2013).
- However, to date, no study has examined the impact of an IPT intervention on parents as they respond to child transgressions.
- I propose to conduct a randomized controlled trial to assess whether an IPT intervention (modified to fit the parenting context) would alter how high entity IPT parents respond to vignettes depicting child transgressions.
- RQ: Will an IPT Intervention modified to the parenting context alter how parents respond to child transgressions?
HARSH/COERCIVE PARENTING PRACTICES

- More research is needed to advance our understanding of the factors that promote use of harsh/coercive parenting practices.
- Parental beliefs have been identified as having both direct and indirect effects on parental behaviors.
  - Milner's (1993, 2003) social information processing model of child physical abuse asserts that certain types of parental beliefs (i.e., pre-existing schemata) influence the types of evaluations, interpretations, and attributions made by parents and may augment parental risk of employing harsh/coercive and abusive parenting behaviors.

PRELIMINARY STUDY: RESULTS SUMMARY

- Findings from the preliminary study suggest that parental mindsets about personality may serve as pre-existing schemata that influence how parents interpret and respond to children’s misbehaviors.
- More specifically, parents who endorsed high levels of entity theory related to personality tended to:
  - Ascribe more negative traits to misbehaving children,
  - Interpret misbehaving children as possessing higher levels of hostile intent,
  - View child misbehaviors as indicative of the child’s personality,
  - More often select harsh parenting strategies in response to child misbehaviors,
  - Less likely to select inductive parenting strategies in response to child misbehaviors,
  - More likely to expect that a misbehaving child will exhibit behavior problems in the future.
PRELIMINARY STUDY: RESULTS SUMMARY

- Consistent with prior research, parental mindsets related to personality were not significantly associated with wrongness ratings.
  - Thus, mindsets related to personality were associated with judgments about how representative a behavior is of a child's personality but were not predictive of the extent to which a particular behavior is viewed as wrong.
- Parents in the present study appeared to consistently differentially respond to the various forms of transgression (personal/conventional/moral).
  - However, the associations between parental implicit theories of personality and responses to the vignettes did not vary significantly across the various types of child transgressions.

SOCIAL INFORMATION PROCESSING MODEL OF CPA

Milner’s (2003) four-stage social information processing (SIP) model of child physical abuse (CPA) asserts that parental cognitions and attributions may augment the risk of aggressive reactions to child behaviors.

- Pre-existing schemata that influence child-rearing
- Stage 1: Biased Perceptions
  - Encode child behaviors more negatively (e.g., Crouch et al., 2010).
- Stage 2: Distorted Interpretations, Attributions, and Evaluations
  - Attribute more internal, global, and stable attributions to child transgressions (e.g., Montes, de Paul, & Milner, 2001).
- Stage 3: Faulty Information Integration
  - Fail to integrate mitigating information when making attributions about child behavior (e.g., De Paúl et al., 2006).
- Stage 4: Response Implementation and Monitoring
  - More use of harsh strategies and less use of inductive strategies (e.g., Chilamkurthi & Milner, 1993).

- Numerous studies have provided support for the tenets of the SIP model of CPA. However, little research focusing on pre-existing schemata that influence parental thought processes has been conducted.
  - Additional research is needed to identify the global cognitive schemata that influence distorted cognitive processes and aggressive disciplinary reactions (Milner, 2003).

Implicit personality theories (IPTs) are one type of pre-existing schemata that a parent brings to the parenting role.

- IPTs are the core beliefs an individual holds about the nature of human attributes as being malleable (incremental mindset) or fixed (entity mindset; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995).
  - The type of IPT that a person holds (i.e., entity versus incremental) provides a framework for the manner in which social information is processed and understood, and has been found to predict different patterns of judgments, attributions, and reactions to aversive social behaviors.
Implicit person theories are the core beliefs an individual holds about the nature of human attributes as being malleable (incremental mindset) or fixed (entity mindset) that subsequently guide individual perceptions, inferences, evaluations, and reactions, especially during aversive events and situations (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995).

- High and low entity (incremental) individuals rate behaviors as similarly wrong/serious.
- High entity individuals are more likely to believe that traits are closely linked with behaviors than low entity individuals.
- For high entity individuals, traits and associated behaviors are expected to remain consistent and stable over time, which in turn promotes a focus on retribution and punishment following perceived social transgressions.
- High entity, in comparison to low entity, theory individuals are more likely to assign trait judgments, attribute hostile intent, feel more negative affect, and react aggressively to others (e.g., Yeager, Trzesniewski, Nokelainen, & Dweck, 2011).
- This study seeks to advance our understanding of the relationships between implicit person theories and parental cognitions and behaviors in response to child misbehavior.
It is hypothesized that high entity IPT parents in the IPT intervention condition, compared to high entity IPT parents in the control condition, will:

- H1: Be less likely to respond to the child using harsh parenting practices.
- H2: Be more likely to respond the child using inductive parenting practices.
- H3: Use less pins in aggression task

PROPOSED DISSERTATION STUDY: VARIABLES

- IPT Intervention Condition
- Control Condition
### PROPOSED DISSERTATION STUDY: VARIABLES

| Independent Variables | • IPT Intervention Condition  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>• Control Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variables</td>
<td>• Vignettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediating Variable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### VIGNETTES AND QUESTIONS

- Vignettes depicting transgressions and follow up questions (Chilamkurti & Milner, 1993)
  - Personal
    - Child went to school in wrinkled clothes.
    - Child wrote all over their hands with a pen.
  - Conventional
    - Child refused to help you set the table for dinner.
    - Child watched TV past their bedtime after you told them to go to bed.
  - Moral
    - Child threw stones at a dog.
    - Child took money from a family members wallet.
- Sample questions following each vignette:
  - In this situation, how likely is it that you would slap/hit/spank the child?
Statement of the Problem

- Findings from a preliminary study suggest that parental IPT beliefs may serve as pre-existing schemata that influence how parents interpret and respond to child transgressions.
  - Interventions designed to alter IPT beliefs have been found to significantly impact how participants respond to the negative behaviors of others (e.g., Yeager et al., 2013).
  - However, to date, no study has examined the impact of an IPT intervention on parents as they respond to child transgressions.
- I propose to conduct a randomized controlled trial to assess whether an IPT intervention (modified to fit the parenting context) would alter how high entity IPT parents respond to vignettes depicting child transgressions.
  - RQ: Will an IPT Intervention modified to the parenting context alter how parents respond to child transgressions?

PROPOSED DISSERTATION STUDY: VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>• IPT Intervention Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Control Condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variables</td>
<td>• Vignettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Voodoo Doll Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediating Variable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### PROPOSED DISSERTATION STUDY: VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Mediating Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • IPT Intervention Condition  
• Control Condition     | • Vignettes         
• Voodoo Doll Task      | • IPT scores        |