

## **Symposium S-E4**

### **Mindsets Matter: The Power of Beliefs for Everyday Life**

**Saturday, February 15, 2014, 9:45 AM - 11:00 AM, Room 17**

**Chair:** Jeni Burnette, University of Richmond

**Co-Chair:** Crystal Hoyt, University of Richmond

This symposium presents four cutting-edge perspectives on the power of personal beliefs to influence significant life outcomes for the self and others across a range of applied contexts. Integrating diverse theories, the symposium outlines how beliefs impact gender-biased employment decisions, the politics of religious conflicts, eating behavior and academic achievement.

#### **Political ideologies: Implications for employment-related gender bias**

Crystal Hoyt

*University of Richmond*

This research examined the role of political ideology and salient traditional female gender roles in employment-related gender bias. We tested the prediction that conservatives would show an anti-female candidate bias and liberals would show a pro-female bias when the traditional female gender role is salient across three studies. In Study 1, 126 participants evaluated a job applicant with the traditional female gender role activated or not. Under gender role salience, conservatives evaluated the female candidate negatively and liberals evaluated her positively. Study 2 (89 participants) replicated this effect and showed that this ideology-based bias does not occur when the non-traditional female gender role is salient and these effects are not driven by differing perceptions regarding the applicant's qualifications. Finally, Study 3 (159 participants) replicated the ideology-based evaluation bias for female candidates and demonstrated that this bias is mediated by liberals' and conservatives' attitudes toward the roles of women in society.

#### **Religious beliefs: Comparing reproductive religiosity theory and religious prosociality theory**

Mike McCullough, Liana Hone, Evan Carter, Eric Pedersen, Nathan DeWall

*University of Miami; University of Kentucky*

Understanding the functions of avowals of religious beliefs in modern society can have important implications for religion and politics. Reproductive Religiosity Theory (RRT) posits that the primary function is to enforce reproductive interests--specifically, to coerce others into adopting a restrictive sociosexual orientation. Religious Prosociality Theory (RPT), in contrast, posits that the chief function of these avowals is to encourage honesty and generosity. Here we describe several studies we have conducted to arbitrate between these two theories. In a correlational study, we found that self-reported religious belief was more strongly related to avowals of strict sexual morality than to avowals of strict cooperative morality. In an experiment, we found that an experimental manipulation that required participants to express their religious beliefs increased their subsequent avowals of strict sexual morality to a greater extent than their avowals of strict prosocial morality. Implications for understanding religious conflict and its politics are discussed.

#### **Lay theories of weight and eating behaviors: Can an incremental belief induce social identity threat?**

Jeni Burnette, Lisa Auster-Gussman  
*University of Richmond; University of Minnesota*

Although recent work suggests that incremental theories are beneficial for self-regulation in the weight domain, the current findings suggest this may not be the case for those who experience weight stigma. More specifically, across three studies, we present evidence that believing body-weight is changeable (incremental theory), rather than fixed (entity theory), reduces calorie consumption, unless you are obese, in which case such beliefs increase consumption. Study 1 illustrates this main effect and interaction on a self-report assessment of calorie intake in a sample of dieting adults. Study 2 replicates these effects on a menu selection outcome (i.e., calories ordered). Study 3 provides causal evidence for the effect of theories of weight on calories consumed in a taste test. We discuss how an incremental, relative to an entity theory, may trigger greater concerns about weight stigma and such apprehensions may deplete self-regulatory resources needed to control eating.

### **A Brief Multi-Dimensional Social-Belonging Intervention Reduces the Gender Achievement Gap in Science**

Lauren Aguilar, Greg Walton, Patricia Burchat, Chaya Nanavati  
*Stanford University*

Beliefs about belonging in school powerfully impact achievement. In science, women may question whether they are valued and respected by peers. We tested two interventions designed to bolster women's sense of belonging and improve peer interactions in a large introductory physics course (N=588), a gateway to STEM majors. Intervention-1, randomized to individuals early in the term, gave students a positive narrative for interpreting adverse experiences in science (Walton & Cohen, 2011). Intervention-2, randomized by section, restructured group work to promote equal participation and peer-to-peer collaboration. Intervention-1 reduced the gender achievement gap in exam performance--men outperformed women in the control condition, but no gender differences emerged in the intervention condition. The effect was strongest for women in restructured sections at the midterm exam. Longitudinal reports of motivation, engagement, and peer interactions are examined. The results imply that changing beliefs about belonging and peer experiences may reduce gender inequality in science.