Lay theories of intelligence: beliefs about whether intelligence is fixed or malleable
- Personal lay theories of intelligence: an individual's beliefs about the nature of intelligence
- Organizational lay theories of intelligence: the shared beliefs of people within an organization about the nature of intelligence

An "organization" can be a company, university, department, classroom, etc.; the key is that a group of people within the context set, and maintain, the expectations about how to succeed

	Entity Theory of Intelligence	Incremental Theory of Intelligence
Definition	intelligence is an innate human characteristic that is relatively fixed across the lifespan; fixed mindset	intelligence is an expandable human characteristic that people can cultivate and develop with hard work and effort; growth mindset
Goal	Demonstrate ability, prove self	Develop ability, seek learning opportunities
Response to challenges	Question ability, withdraw effort, become defensive	Persist, try new strategies
Key *explicit* message	You either "have it" or you don't.	With time and effort you can become smarter.
Key *implicit* message	Only certain people are smart. *(Group-based stereotypes about intelligence are relevant)*	Anyone can be seen as smart. *(Group-based stereotypes about intelligence are irrelevant)*

How do theories of intelligence impact how professors engage with their students?
→ Instructors who hold an entity (v. incremental) theory are:
- Quicker to judge students as having low ability
- More likely to offer comforting, but unhelpful, strategies following initial failure (e.g., assign less homework, suggest dropping the course, explain that not everyone is cut out for that field)
→ Students can quickly (and accurately) glean their professors' theories of intelligence

How do people and organizations communicate lay theories of intelligence?
→ Recruitment materials:
- Entity theory: Emphasis on attracting people "who have the intelligence and abilities to succeed"
- Incremental theory: Emphasis on attracting people "who are motivated to find environments and working strategies that help them learn, discover, and grow"
→ Setting expectations:
- Entity theory: "Look to your left, and look to your right. By the end of this year, only 1 of you will have an A in this class."
- Incremental theory: "This class will be difficult, but if you are diligent in your studies and put in consistent effort, you can succeed."
→ After poor performance:
- Entity theory: "You might want to think about dropping this course, because it will be pretty hard to come back from this. You just might not be cut out for this field."
- Incremental theory: "What study tactics did you use to prepare for this exam? Let's talk through some different strategies you can use for next time."

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How do people respond to different organizational lay theories of intelligence?

→ During moments of evaluation…
- Entity organization: people emphasize intelligence
- Incremental organization: people emphasize motivation

→ In day-to-day perceptions of climate…
- People from underrepresented and/or stigmatized groups <u>trust entity organizations less</u> than incremental organizations
- People from underrepresented and/or stigmatized groups <u>expect to be stereotyped more</u> in entity (v. incremental) organizations
- Entity organizations <u>trigger stereotype threat</u> (and, as a result, academic underperformance) moreso than incremental organizations
  * *Stereotype threat* is the fear of confirming, or being seen to confirm, negative stereotypes about one's group
  * For more on stereotype threat and its pernicious effects, read "A Threat in the Air: How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Performance" by Claude Steele, *American Psychologist* (1997)

In studies comparing the impact of personal theories of intelligence and organizational theories of intelligence, organizational theories of intelligence carry more weight. Thus, what you say to students about their ability to succeed can matter more than what they personally believe.

Additional Reading

Mindset by Carol Dweck (2006)

"A Company I Can Trust? Organizational Lay Theories Moderate Stereotype Threat for Women"
Katherine Emerson & Mary Murphy, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (2015)

"A Culture of Genius: How an Organization's Lay Theory Shapes People's Cognition, Affect, and Behavior"
Mary Murphy & Carol Dweck, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (2010)

"It's Ok—Not Everyone Can Be Good at Math: Instructors with an Entity Theory Comfort (and Demotivate) Students"
Aneeta Rattan, Catherine Good, & Carol Dweck, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (2012)