

Using HINTS to Spur Innovation in Theory and Practice

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Goals

- **Briefly discuss the interdependence between theory and practice and its implications for innovations in health promotion and health communication**
- **Illustrate how HINTS affords a valuable opportunity to pursue theoretical innovations that can inform practice**

“...Many psychologists working today in an applied area are keenly aware of the need for close cooperation between theoretical and applied psychology. This can be accomplished in psychology, as it has been accomplished in physics, if the theorist does not look toward applied problems with highbrow aversion or with a fear of social problems, and if the applied psychologist realizes that there is nothing so practical as a good theory.”

--Kurt Lewin (1943-44), “Problems of research in social psychology”

The Interplay between Theory and Practice

- **Where do “good” theories come from?**
 - (a) Theories are dynamic entities that develop based on an iterative cycle of specification, application, and evaluation**
 - (b) Theories benefit from being tested with an array of methodologies and across a range of settings.**
 - (c) Theories should be challenged not coddled**
 - (d) Practical problems afford a invaluable opportunity to shed light on the strengths and the weakness of our theories.**

(Rothman, 2004; Weinstein & Rothman, 2006; Michie, Sheeran, & Rothman, 2007)

Using HINTS to Inform Theory and Enhance Practice

- **How can HINTS inform theory?**

.....provides opportunities to test theoretical principles that have been studied in the lab in new settings and/or with new populations (enables investigators to refine/revise models)

.....provides opportunities to delineate new theoretical principles that can, in turn, be examined more systematically in the lab (enables investigators to generate new models)

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-provides opportunities to test theoretical principles that have been studied in the lab in new settings and/or with new populations
 - For example, in the special issue on HINTS 2003 (*Journal of Health Communication*) several papers examined issues concerning risk perception and worry that extended findings previously observed in the lab (e.g., Zajac et al., 2006; Dillard et al., 2006)
 - With Kevin McCaul and colleagues, I developed a series of items included in HINTS 2005 to examine the content of people's mental models of cancer; building on prior work by Leventhal and colleagues that, to date, has focused on patients' mental models of their own illness.

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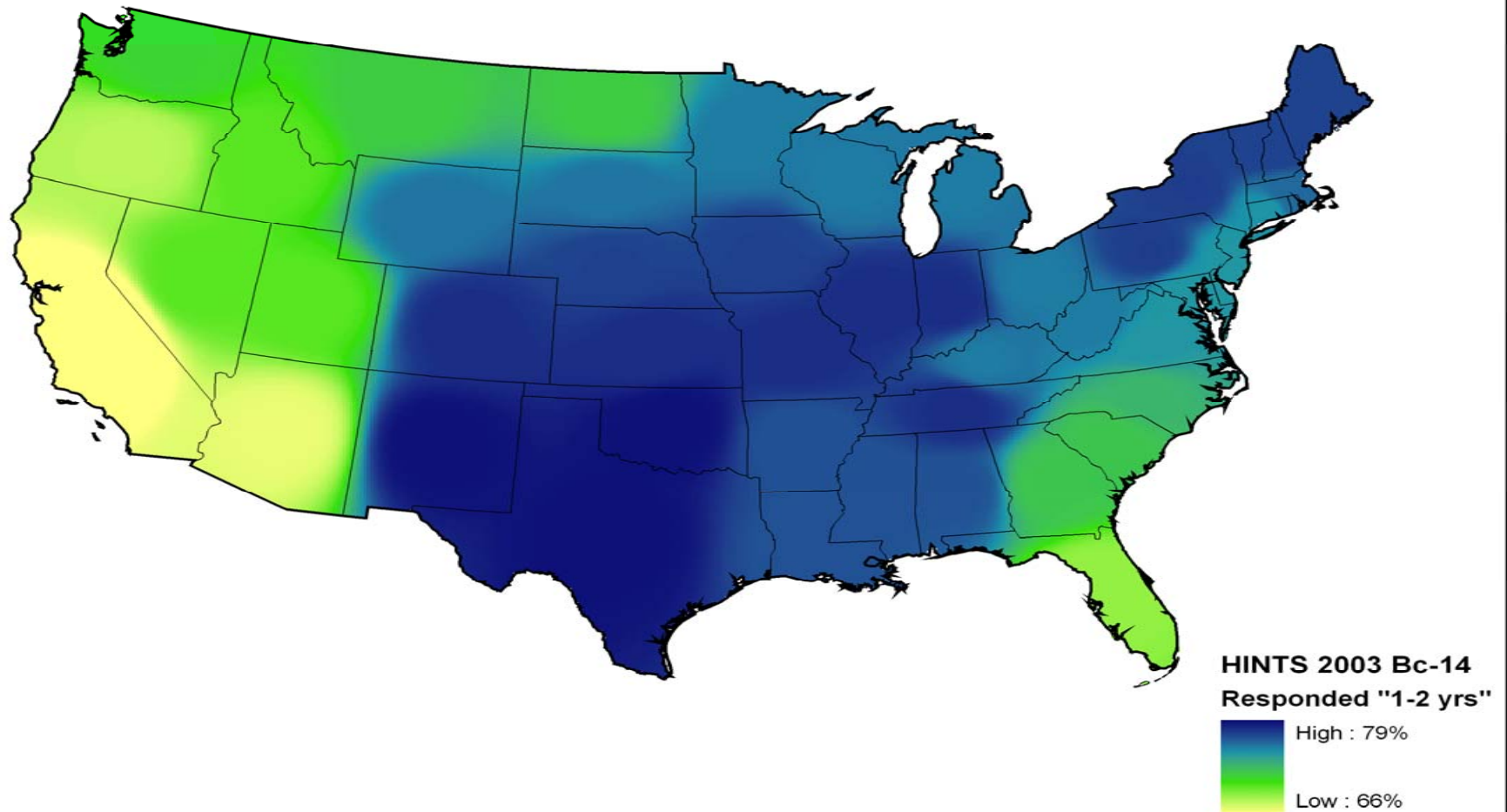
-provides opportunities to test theoretical principles that have been studied in the lab in new settings and/or with new populations
- In HINTS 2007, Jamie Arndt, Rick Moser, and colleagues have developed a series of items to test predictions derived from prior work on Terror Management Theory and health (e.g., Arndt et al, 2007)

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-provides opportunities to delineate new theoretical principles that can, in turn, be tested more systematically in the lab
- **HINTS provides investigators with a rich set of opportunities to examine the relation between a broad array of constructs across a large, diverse sample**
- **HINTS has the potential to shed light on factors that too often are not visible when research is conducted in a limited pool of settings and/or with a limited sample of participants.**

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How Often Should Women Be Getting Mammograms?



Planning for the Future: Two Ways to Use HINTS to Inform Theory

- ***Passive Path.*** Work to provide investigators with a rich set of measures and allow them to capitalize on/take advantage of the available information

Planning for the Future: Two Ways to Use HINTS to Inform Theory

- ***Passive Path.*** Work to provide investigators with a rich set of measures and allow them to capitalize on/take advantage of the available information
 - **Priority:** Visibility and accessibility of data
(<http://hints.cancer.gov/>)
 - **Concern:** Reliance on proxy measures for critical constructs (e.g., perceived ambiguity, Han et al., 2006; cancer information screening and scanning, Shim et al., 2006)

Planning for the Future: Two Ways to Use HINTS to Inform Theory

- ***Proactive Path.*** Invite investigators to propose modules that afford opportunities for theory testing and development; in particular, those that capitalize on HINTS' unique features

Planning for the Future: Two Ways to Use HINTS to Inform Theory

- ***Proactive Path.*** Invite investigators to propose modules that afford opportunities for theory testing and development; in particular, those that capitalize on HINTS' unique features
 - **Priority:** Processes for submission and review
 - **Concern:** Limits the scope/breadth of HINTS

Planning for the Future: Two Ways to Use HINTS to Inform Theory

- ***Passive Path.*** Work to provide investigators with a rich set of measures and allow them to capitalize on/take advantage of the available information
- ***Proactive Path.*** Invite investigators to propose modules that afford opportunities for theory testing and development; in particular, those that capitalize on HINTS' unique features

Over time both routes provide invaluable opportunities to forge “good” theories