



Children's Hospital of Colorado
Pediatric Mental Health Institute

Make Your Words Count: Examining Verbal Interactions Between Parents and Adolescents

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Background

- Intolerance of Uncertainty is a phenomenon underlying anxiety that reflects discomfort with ambiguity, and avoidance of situations with uncertain outcomes.
- Research suggests that parents who have high levels of Intolerance of Uncertainty may exhibit excessive control of their children (Moore, Whaley & Sigman, 2004).
- Parents who exhibit overcontrol may reduce their child's exposure to situations, thus enhancing their anxiety due to the child's inability to gain the tools to cope with anxiety provoking situations.

Hypothesis:

Higher parent
Intolerance of
Uncertainty
scores

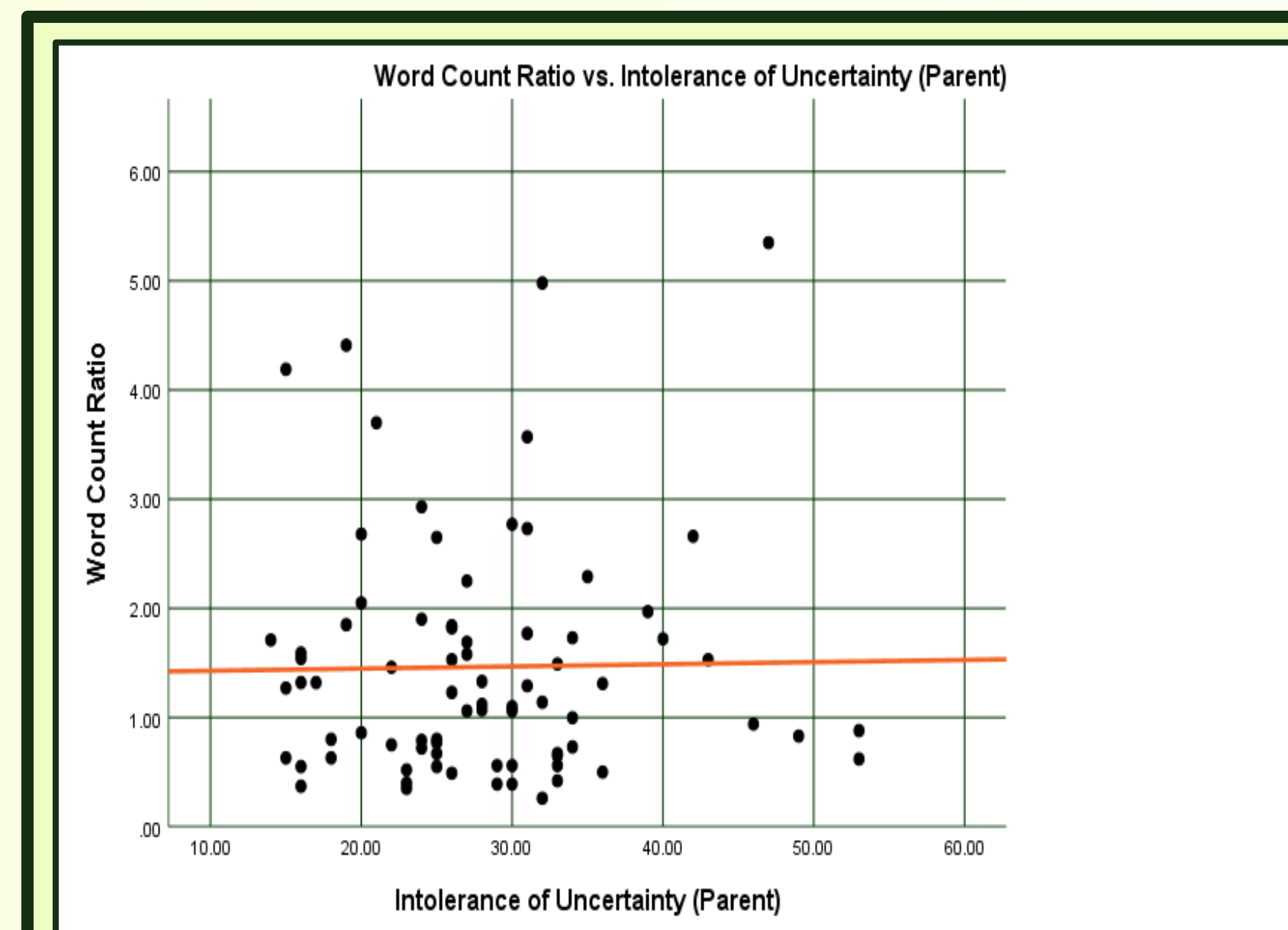
Higher word
count ratio

Higher adolescent
Penn State
Worry
Questionnaire
scores

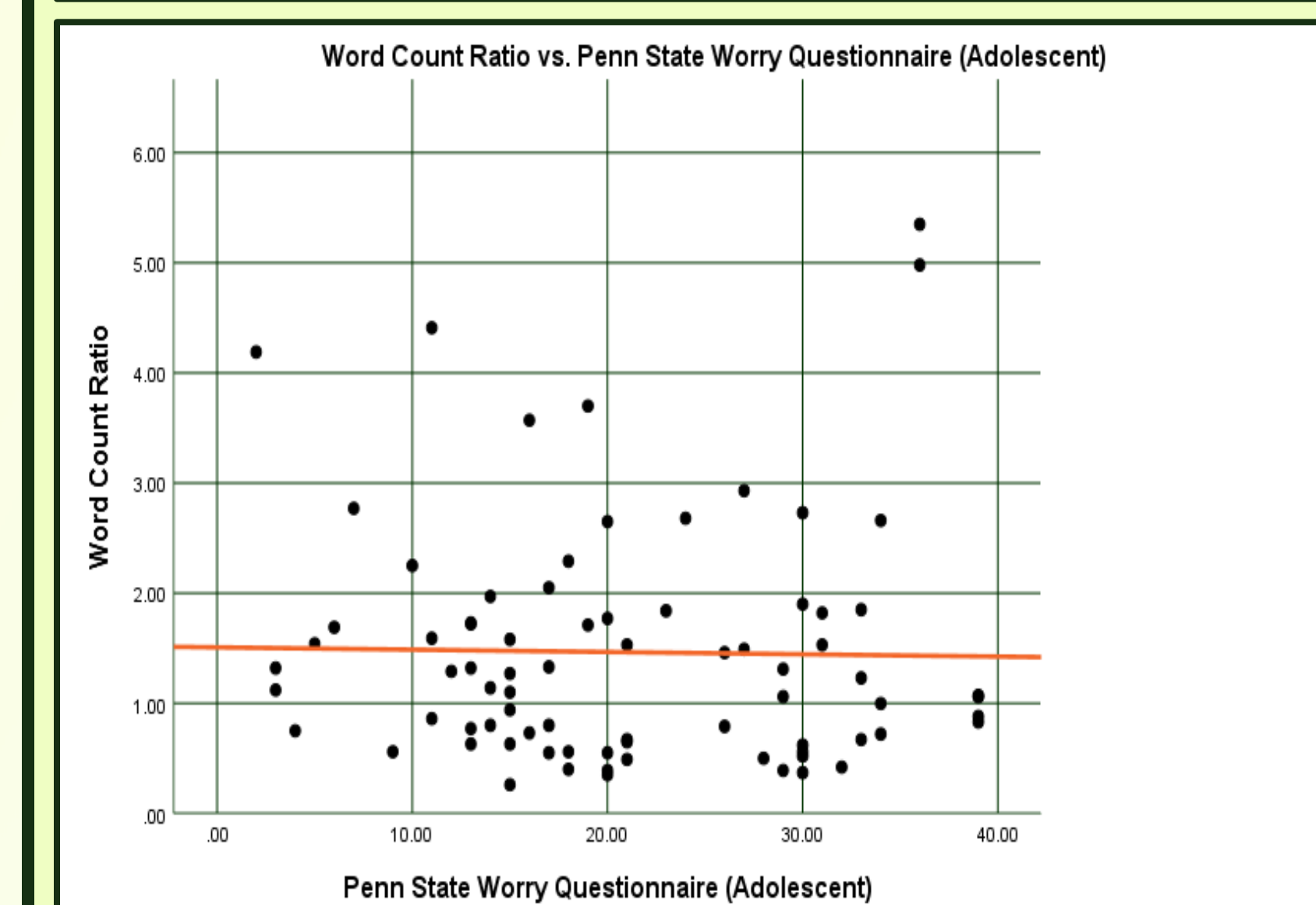
Results

	Word Count Ratio	PSWQ (Adolescent)	PSWQ (Parent)	IUS (Adolescent)	IUS (Parent)
Word Count Ratio	1				
PSWQ (Adolescent)	-.019	1			
PSWQ (Parent)	.005	.232*	1		
IUS (Adolescent)	.080	.725**	.198	1	
IUS (Parent)	0.16	.401**	.719**	390**	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)



Parent IUS scores
were not
significantly
correlated with
word count ratio



Adolescent PSWQ
scores were not
significantly
correlated with
word count ratio

Methods

- Parent and adolescent dyads engaged in 5-minute long unstructured conversations while being video recorded

"I would like for you to spend the next five minutes talking about [Name] future."

- Videos were transcribed and word count was established for each speaker
- Word count ratio was calculated by dividing parent word count by adolescent word count

Clinical Assessment:
Penn State Worry Questionnaire (PSWQ) adult and child versions
Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS) adult and child versions

Sample	
N	78
Mean age in years (SD)	15.50 (1.70)
Gender	
Female	47
Male	31
Race	
Black	9
American Indian or Alaska Native	2
Asian	7
White	72
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	12
Non-Hispanic	66
Mean PSWQ Score Adolescent (SD)	21.00 (9.75)
Mean PSWQ Score Parent (SD)	44.21 (14.99)
Mean IUS Score Adolescent (SD)	29.87 (10.59)
Mean IUS Score Parent (SD)	27.96 (8.83)

Discussion

- Although word count was not found to play a definitive factor in either parent IUS scores or adolescent PSWQ scores, there is still more research to be done on how other mechanisms between parent-child interactions play a role in adolescent anxiety.
- Future research will be looking at how granting of autonomy, criticism, and worry/anxiety of the parent affect adolescent anxiety.
- All three characteristics will be measured using a coding scheme.
- This pertains to previous literature that suggests that parent anxiety can enhance child anxiety, in addition to child anxiety enhancing parent anxiety.

References/Acknowledgements

- Moore, P. S., Whaley, S. E., & Sigman, M. (2004). Interactions Between Mothers and Children: Impacts of Maternal and Child Anxiety. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 113(3), 471-476.
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