

Lionizing those Who Agree and Demonizing Those Who Disagree: Effects on Attitude Extremity

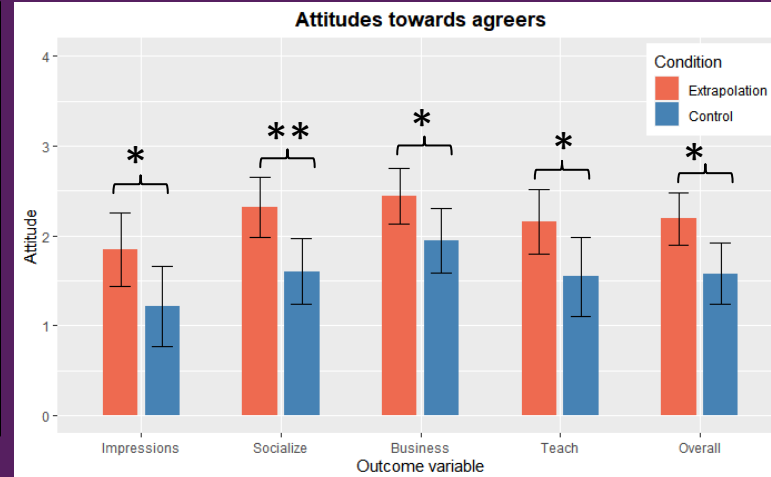
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INTRODUCTION

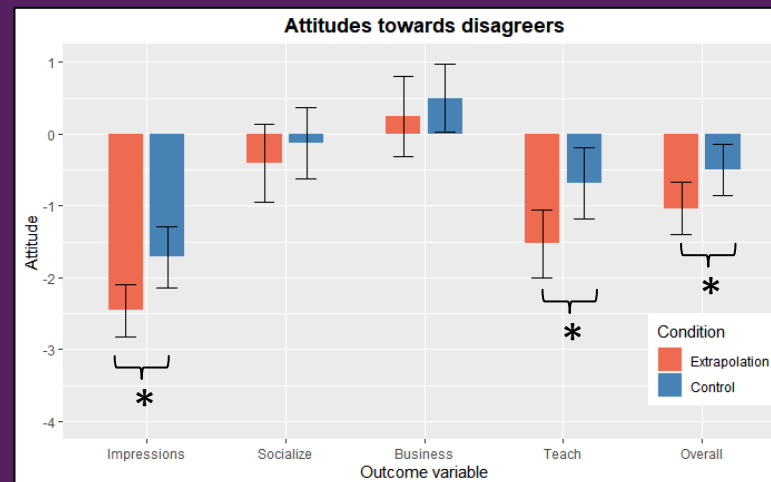
- Mere thought can change attitudes.
- Active associations inform attitudes.
- Certain types of thought can inform more extreme associations & attitudes.
- The current study examined the effects of a new type of thought- trait extrapolation- on attitudes towards advocates on each side of a social issue.

METHOD

- Reported initial attitude towards abortion.
- Randomly assigned to a condition:
 - Extrapolation:** Listed 5 personality traits each that proponents and opponents of legalizing abortion might have. Indicated how positive or negative extrapolated traits were.
 - Control:** Listed synonyms of 10 experimenter-provided traits.
- Reported impressions and willingness to socialize with, do business with, and have children taught by advocates on each side.



NOTE. ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$



RESULTS

- Extrapolators had more positive overall attitudes towards those they agreed with and more negative overall attitudes towards those they disagreed with relative to control participants.
- Valence of extrapolated traits predicted overall attitudes towards agreeers ($b = 0.44$) and disagreeers ($b = 0.37$).

DISCUSSION

- Conceptual replication of work on mere thought.
- Provided evidence of a new thought strategy that results in attitude polarization.
- Future research should explore the generalizability of the current findings and measure effects of trait extrapolation on attitudes towards the social issue itself.