

Disability Stereotypes and Biases

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Overview

- Nature of disability stereotypes
- Perceptions and consequences of patronizing treatment
(2 studies)
- Intervention implications

Disability:

Definition and Prevalence

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits major life activities (ADA, 1990)
- Affects 1 in 5 U.S. adults (CDC, 2015)
- Intersection with aging

Ambivalent Stereotypes

- Warm but incompetent
(Nario-Redmond, 2010)
- Targets of pity
- Being treated like children

Unsolicited Help

- A form of patronizing treatment (i.e., apparently prosocial acts that are condescending because they presume the target's incompetence)
- Costs for people with disabilities
- A dilemma



Study 1: Perceptions of Patronizing Treatment

Hypothesis

- Sighted people would find patronizing treatment more appropriate than hostile treatment
- Blind people would find both types of treatment equally inappropriate

Participants

- 268 U.S. residents
- Sighted sample (n = 166):
 - Recruited from MTurk
 - Mean age = 35.33 years
- Blind sample (n = 102):
 - Recruited via email lists affiliated with blindness organizations
 - Mean age = 40.53 years

Scenarios

- Mary, 22 years old, blind and travels independently with a white cane
- Stops at a street corner to ask a pedestrian for directions

Pedestrian's behavior:

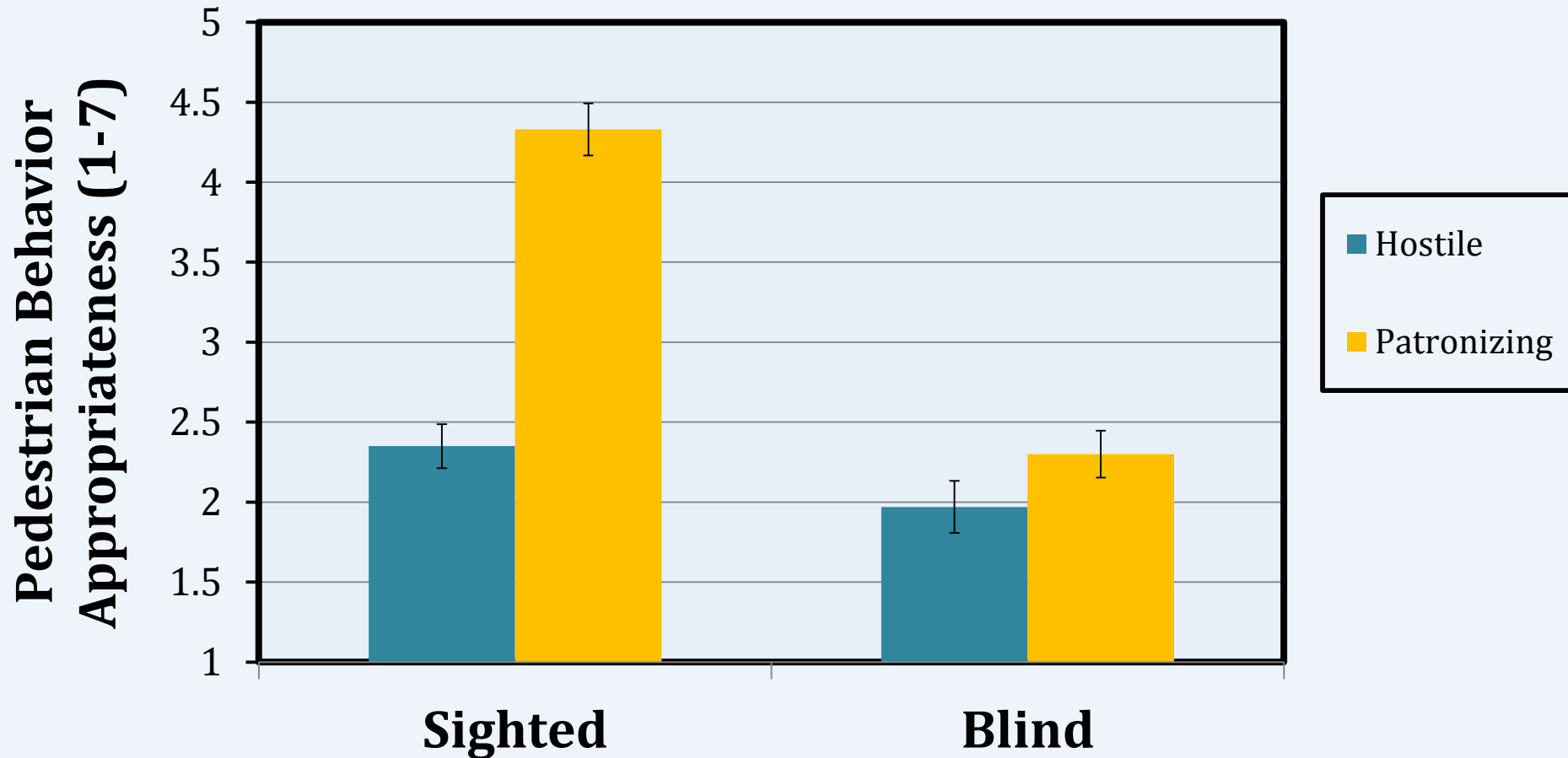
- Grabs Mary's arm without her consent and insists on bringing her to her destination (Patronizing condition)
- Tells Mary to go home without answering her question (Hostile condition)

Dependent Measures

Perceived appropriateness of the pedestrian's behavior:

- Appropriate
- Helpful
- Condescending
- Overbearing

Perceptions of Patronizing vs. Hostile Treatment



$F(1, 264) = 26.64, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .09$

Study 2:
Consequences of
Confronting
Patronizing Treatment

Hypotheses

- The blind target who confronts the pedestrian would be perceived as less warm than her non-confronting counterpart, especially in the case of patronizing treatment
- Interaction mediated by perceived appropriateness of the pedestrian's behavior

Participants and Design

- 249 U.S. residents participated on-line via MTurk
- 2 (Treatment: Patronizing vs. Hostile) x 2 (Response: Confrontational vs. Non-Confrontational)
between-subjects design

Scenarios

Pedestrian's behavior:

- Grabs Mary's arm without her consent and insists on bringing her to her destination (Patronizing condition)
- Tells Mary to go home without answering her question (Hostile condition)

Response:

- Assertive confrontation (i.e., "I can handle myself just fine and was only trying to get some simple directions.")
- Passive acquiescence

Dependent Measures

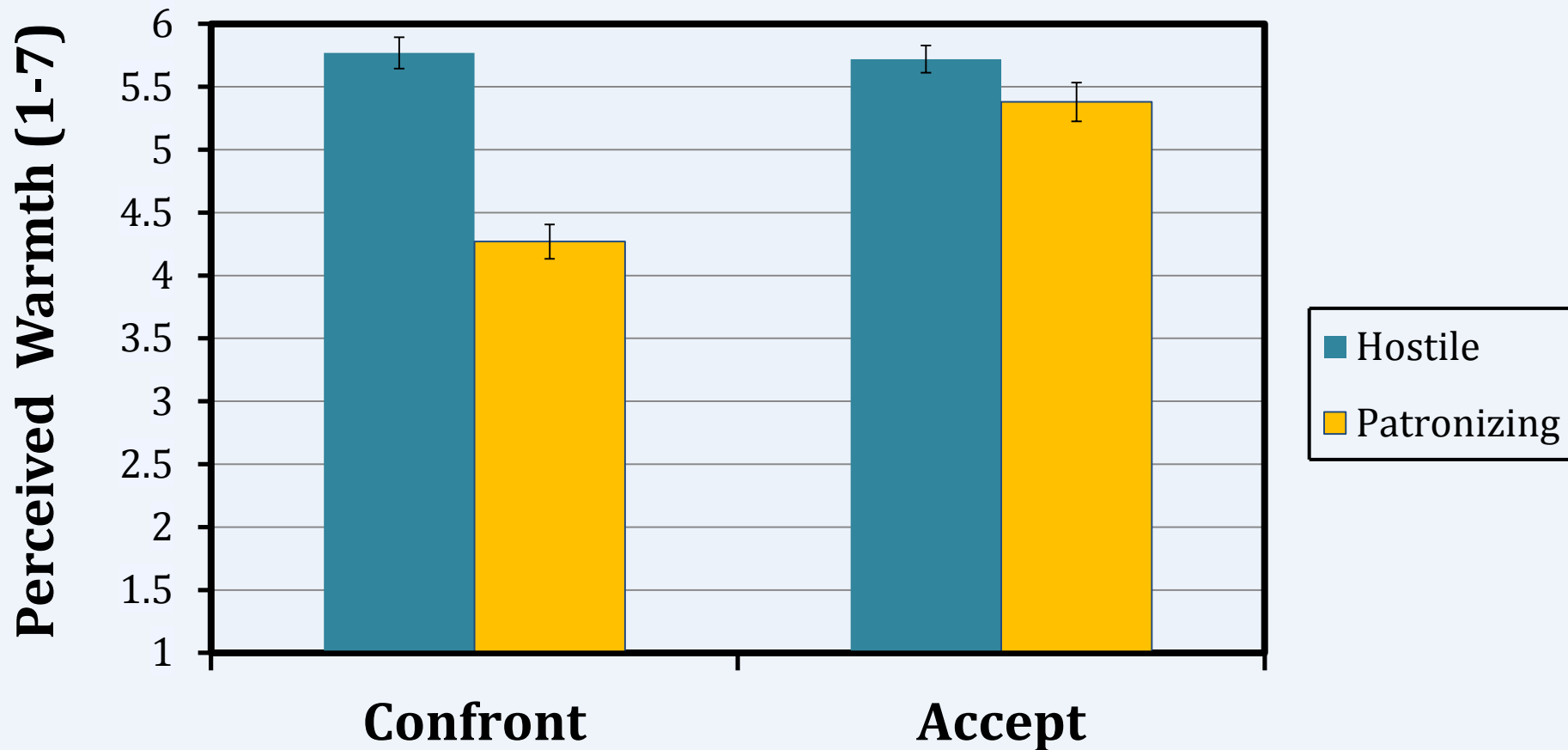
Perceived appropriateness of pedestrian's behavior:

- Appropriate
- Helpful
- Condescending
- Overbearing

Perceived warmth of Mary:

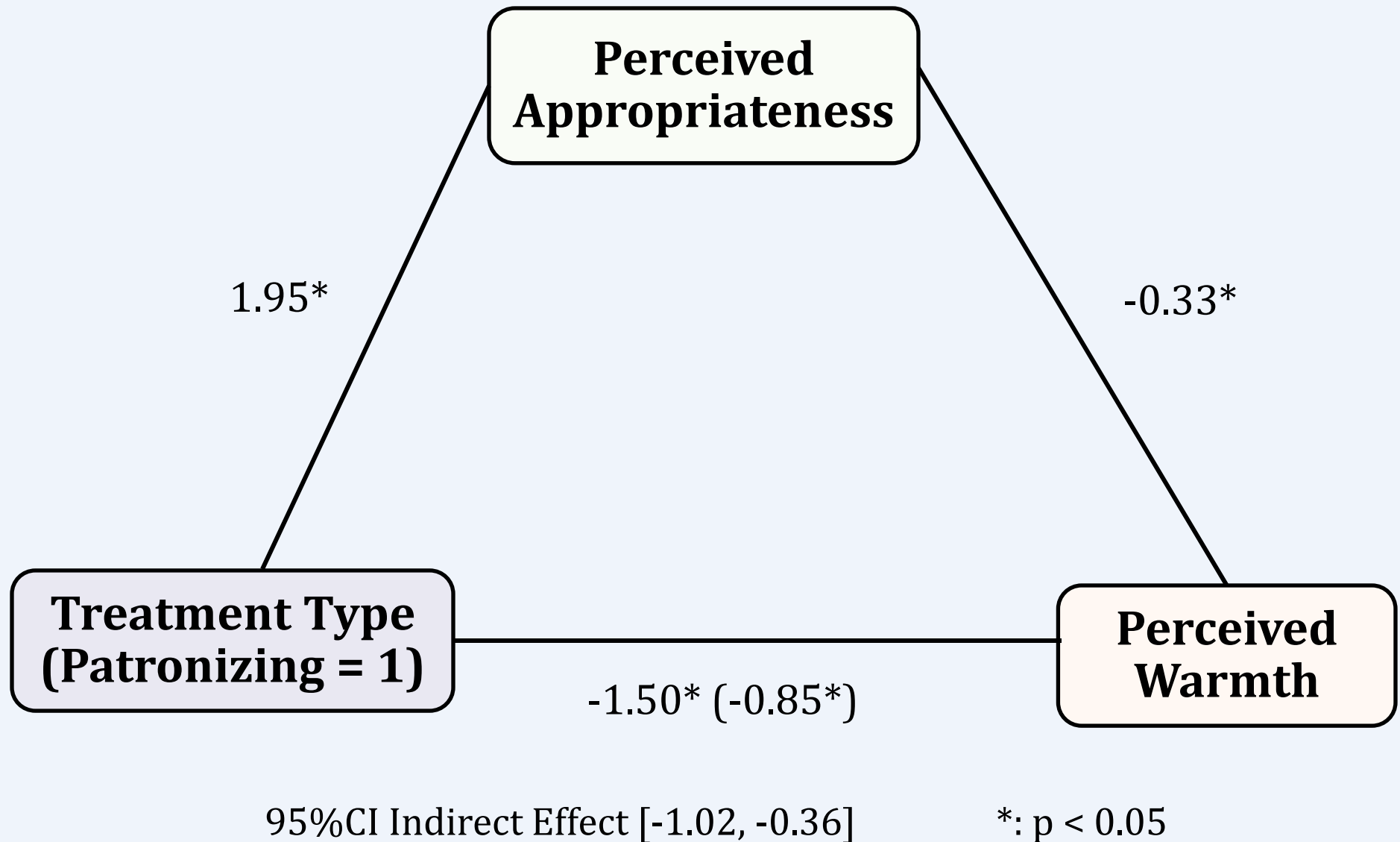
- Warm
- Good-natured
- Rude
- Arrogant
- General liking

Effect of Confrontation on Perceived Warmth



$F(1, 245) = 19.89, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .08$

Confront Condition



Summary

- Divergent perspectives on perceiving patronizing treatment
- Interpersonal penalty for people with disabilities refusing unsolicited help
- Balance between educating and getting along with the nondisabled public

Intervention Implications

- Communication skills training:
 - Ask rather than assume
 - Positive, equal-status contact between people with and without disabilities
- Media portrayals:
 - Emphasis on competence
 - Implications for fundraisers

Concluding Points

- Ambivalent nature of disability stereotypes (i.e., warm but incompetent)
- Contending with patronizing treatment: a dilemma
- Value of individual-level interventions

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