



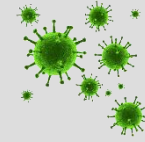
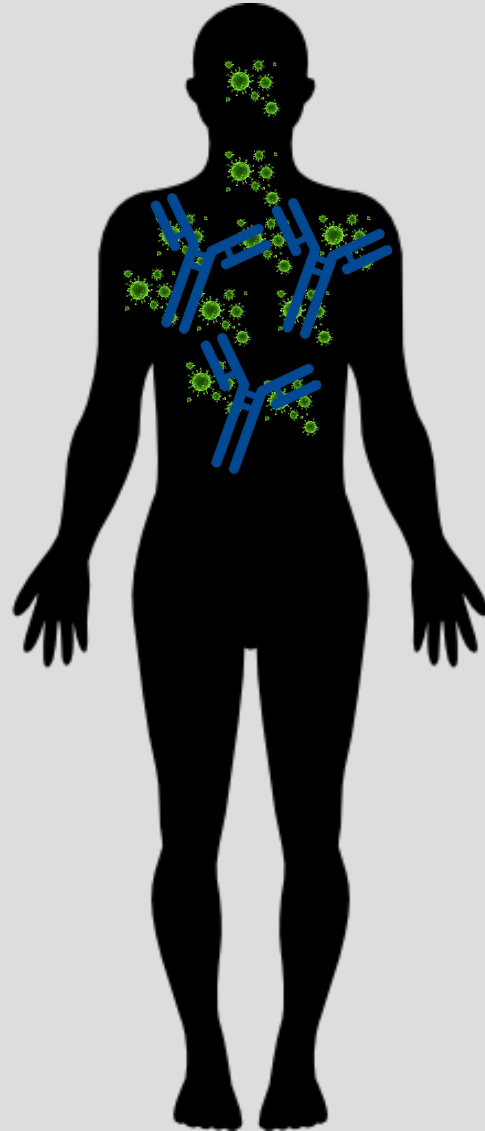
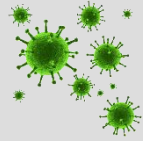
THE EFFICACY OF COMMUNICATIVE
INOCULATION AS COUNTER-
RADICALIZATION: EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE

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AGENDA

- Inoculation theory
- Rationale
- Method and Results
- Discussion and future directions

INOCULATION THEORY



INOCULATION THEORY

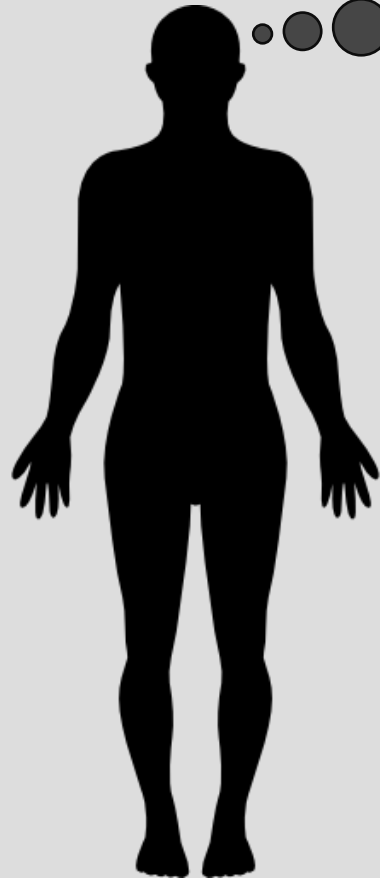
- Rather than persuade, it helps targets resist persuasion
- Multiple elements
 - Explicit forewarning: Someone will try to persuade you and they have been very successful in the past
 - Refutational preemption: Here are some tools to challenge the messages that you may encounter
- Shown to be effective in multiple communicative domains by arousing pre-emptive [psychological reactance](#)

PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTANCE

- A negative form of arousal resulting from the recognition that someone is attempting to persuade you
 - We all have innate need for autonomy
 - When that autonomy is threatened, we go in the opposite direction to re-establish our autonomy



INOCULATION THEORY



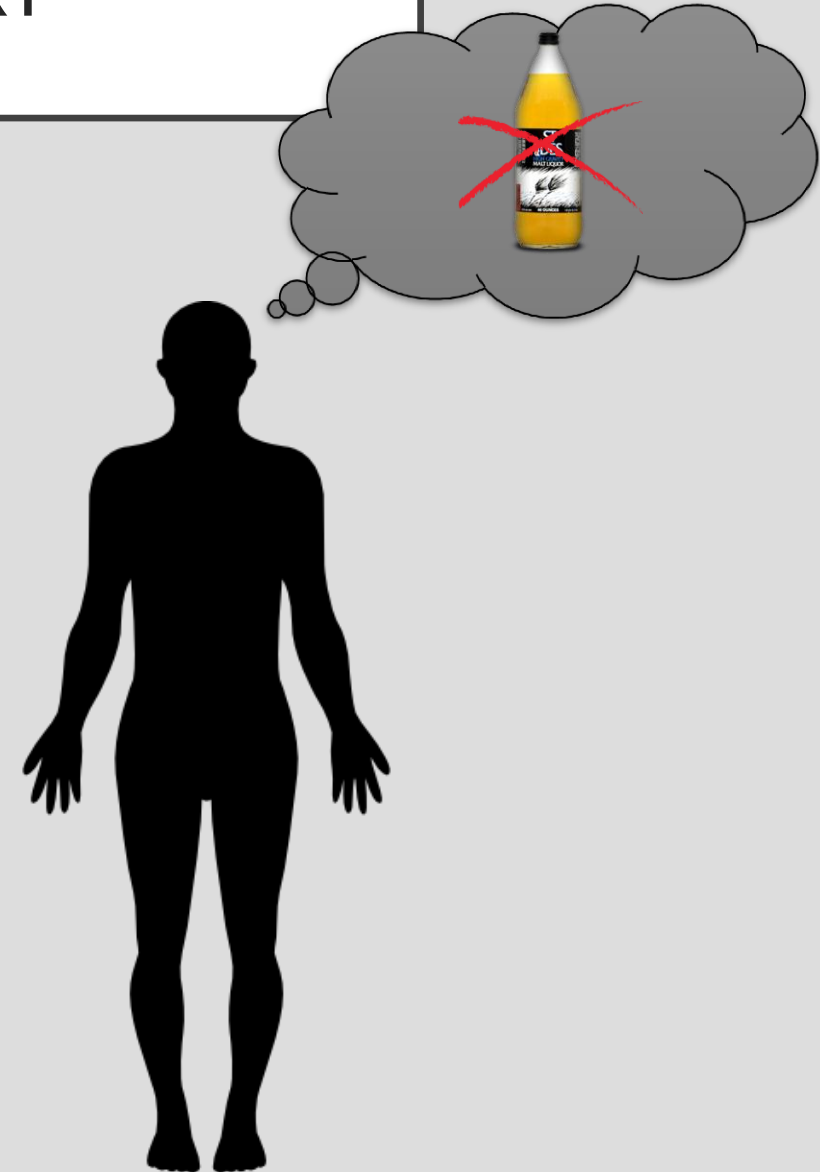
Drinking malt liquor is bad for me,
tastes like sewer water, and I
shouldn't drink it.

“Healthy” attitude



INOCULATION THEORY

One day, someone might try to convince you that malt liquor is good. It might even seem good. But, it tastes awful and the alcohol in it does damage to your liver. Don't fall into that trap.

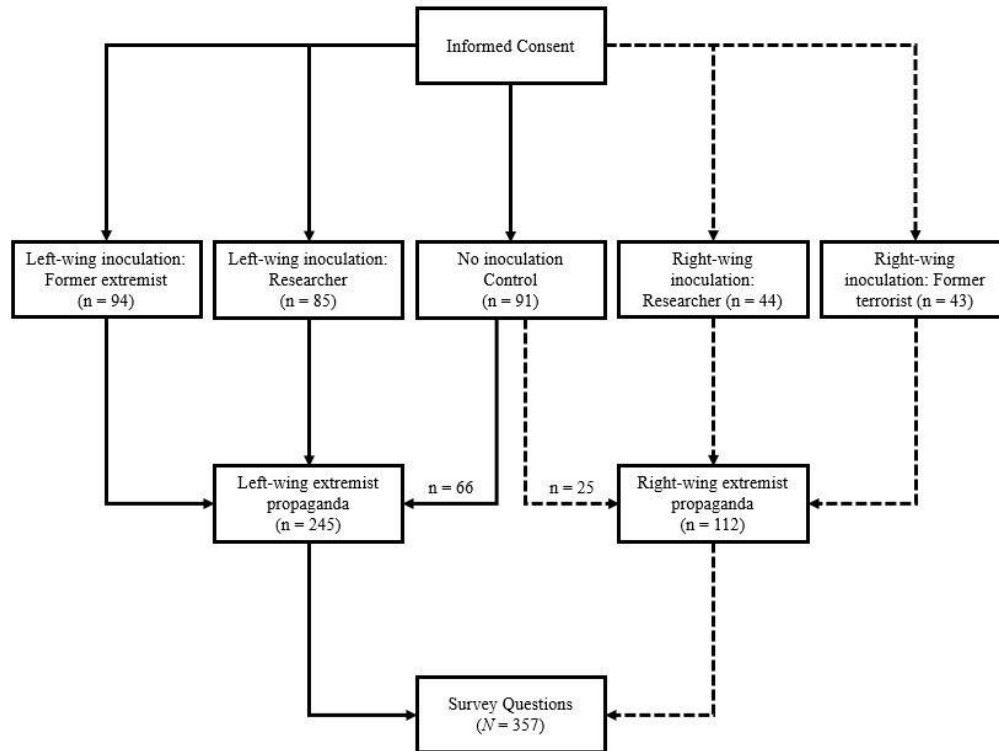


RATIONALE

- Radicalization: a social and psychological process through which an individual develops beliefs and attitudes consistent with a terrorist ideology
 - Belief and attitude change occurs via persuasive messaging
- If inoculation works in other persuasive domains, why not for preventing persuasion via terrorist propaganda

Prediction / Research Question	
H1	Psychological reactance: Inoculation > non-inoculation
H1(a)	Counter-arguing: Inoculation > non-inoculation
H1(b)	Anger: Inoculation > non-inoculation
H2	Perceived credibility of terrorist group: Inoculation < non-inoculation
H3	Intention to support terrorist group: Inoculation < non-inoculation
RQ1	Is the inoculation–persuasion relationship moderated by message source or propaganda ideology?
RQ2	Does reactance and credibility mediate the inoculation–persuasion relationship?

METHOD



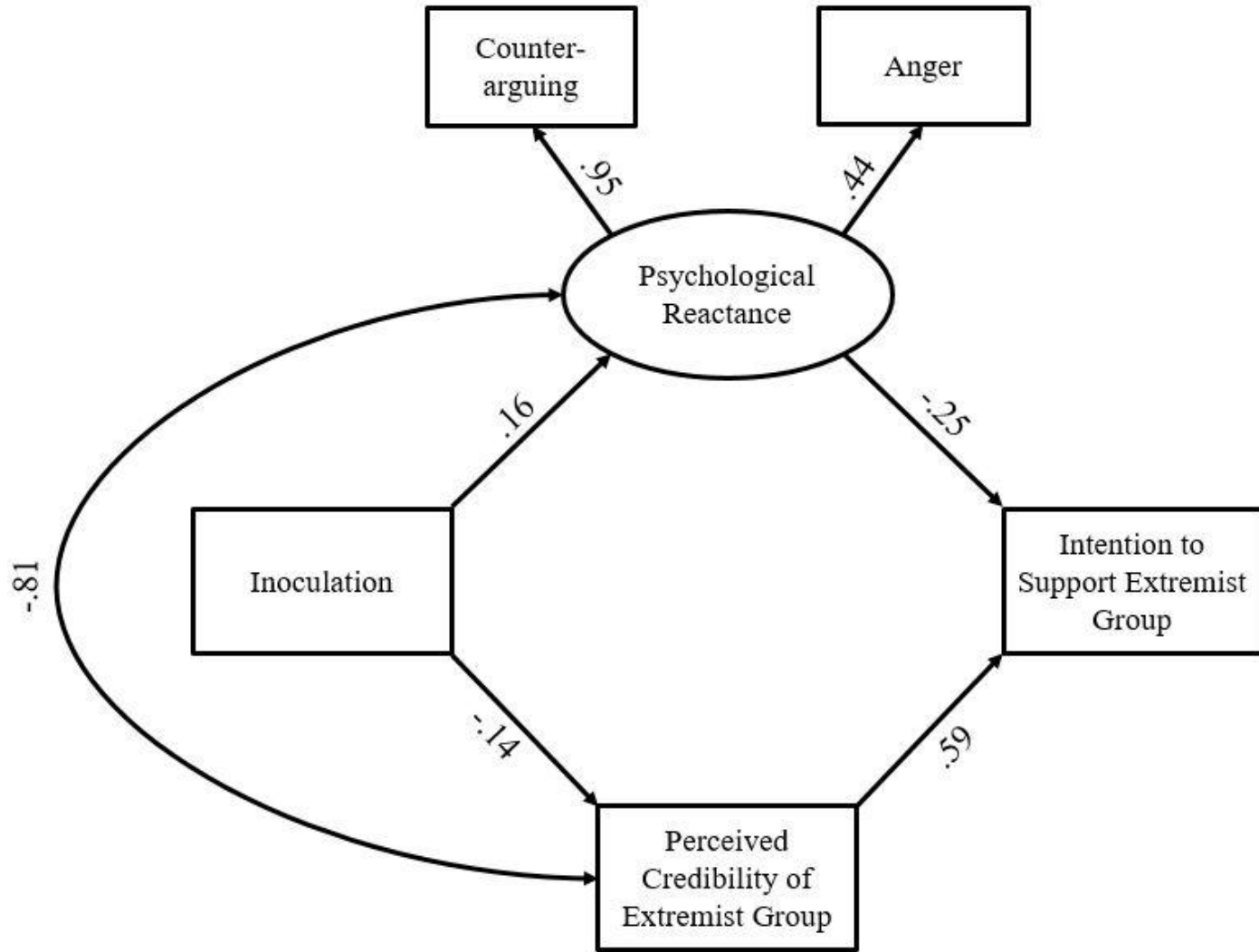
- National, opt-in stimulus-survey via Qualtrics surveys in June of 2018 (N = 357)
- 2 × 2 between-subjects design with a no-inoculation control
 - Message source: Former extremist vs. researcher
 - Message ideology: Extremist left-wing vs. extremist right-wing
- In the inoculation conditions, participants exposed to left- or right-wing inoculation message before the propaganda

RESULTS: H1 – H3

	Inoculation μ (SD)	Non-Inoculation μ (SD)	Difference Test
H1 (a): Counter-arguing	4.09 (2.03)	3.34 (1.25)	$t(355) = 2.99$ ($p < 0.01$)
H1 (b): Anger	3.69 (1.55)	3.42 (1.73)	$t(355) = 1.95$ ($p = 0.08$)
H2: Extremist group credibility	46.77 (31.23)	56.51 (28.79)	$t(355) = 2.62$ ($p < 0.01$)
H3: Support intention	35.41 (32.02)	44.96 (34.41)	$t(355) = 2.41$ ($p < 0.01$)

RESULTS: RQI (MODERATORS)

	Counter-arguing	Anger	Perceptions of extremist group credibility	Intention to support extremist group
Source of inoculation message				
Researcher (n = 129)	4.20 (2.02)	3.86 (1.79)	45.62 (31.99)	32.56 (30.53)
Former extremist (n = 137)	3.99 (2.08)	3.78 (1.60)	45.00 (32.20)	33.83 (30.90)
Difference test (two-tailed)	t(264) = .83 (p = .41)	t(264) = .39 (p = .69)	t(264) = .16 (p = .87)	t(264) = -.34 (p = .74)
Propaganda ideology				
Left-wing (n = 245)	3.82 (2.05)	3.71 (1.64)	49.41 (31.68)	36.58 (31.02)
Right-wing (n = 112)	4.09 (2.20)	3.84 (1.91)	44.40 (31.78)	32.08 (31.73)
Difference test (two-tailed)	t(355) = -1.14 (p = .26)	t(355) = -.67 (p = .51)	t(355) = -1.38 (p = .17)	t(264) = -1.26 (p = .21)



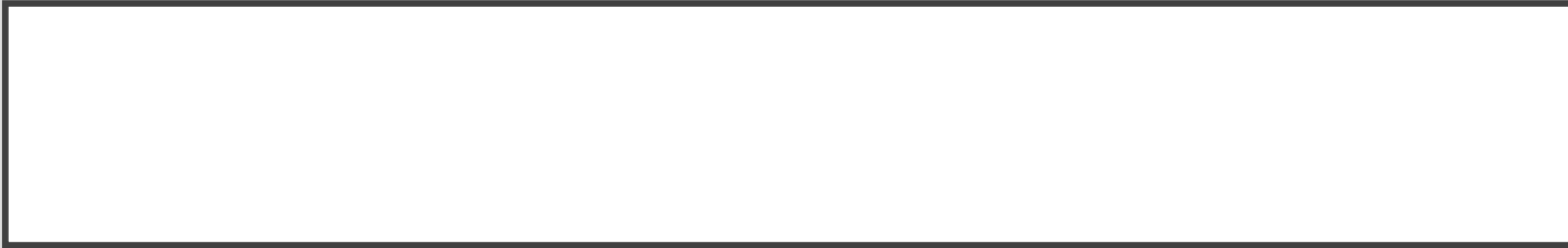
RESULTS: RQ2 (VARIABLE STRUCTURE)

SYNOPSIS

- Communicative inoculation:
 - Increases psychological reactance in response to extremist propaganda
 - Diminishes perceptions of extremist group credibility
- Psychological reactance and perceptions of extremist group credibility predict intention to support the extremist group
- Relationships remain robust across left- and right-wing extremist ideology and source of the message (i.e., researcher vs. former extremist)

IMPLICATIONS

- Extends inoculation theory into the realm of violent extremism
- There is no direct relationship between inoculation and behavioral intention
 - Persuasive practices that increase reactance or reduce extremist group credibility can reduce behavioral intention
- Potential empirical support for the development of counter-radicalization practices
 - Experimental social science can inform the development of these practices



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