

Some is still “not all”, even in face-threatening contexts: revisiting Bonnefon et al. (2009)

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SOME as not-all

- *SOME* literally means more than one, but people uttering “Some Xs Y” are often assumed to mean “not all of the Xs Y” (**scalar implicature**)

Factors that can suppress scalar implicature

- Downward entailment (e.g. Hartshorne et al., 2015)
- Speaker epistemic state (e.g. Bergen & Grodner, 2012)
- Lower-bounded QUD (e.g. Politzer-Ahles & Fiorentino, 2013)
- Face-threatening context (e.g. Bonnefon et al., 2009)

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- **Face-threatening context?** (e.g. Bonnefon et al., 2009)

Bonnefon et al. (2009)

- **Face boost:** ... After the discussion, one fellow member confides to you that ‘Some people loved your poem.’
From what this fellow member told you, is it possible that everyone loved your poem?
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Bonnefon et al. (2009)

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 - 83% “no”: they really interpret “some” as “not all”
- **Face threat:** ... After the discussion, one fellow member confides to you that ‘Some people hated your poem.’
From what this fellow member told you, is it possible that everyone hated your poem?
 - Only 58% “no”: they don’t so much interpret “some” as “not all”

Why do people think everyone might have hated the poem even though the speaker said *some*?

Two explanations:

- Bonnefon and colleagues' explanation: Scalar implicature is less likely under face-threat (so *some* means *some and possibly all*)
 - The speaker actually intended to communicate *some and possibly all the people hated your talk* – that's the message they wanted you to receive
- Alternative explanation: The scalar implicature is there and the speaker is just lying
 - The speaker really does intend to communicate *some but not all*. The speaker is lying to protect your feelings

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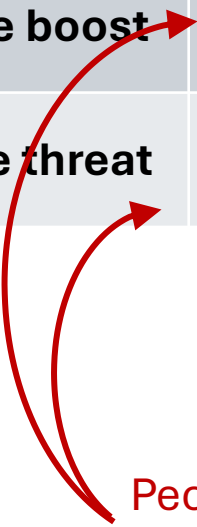
- Remember: implicatures can make us interpret *some* as “not all”, but they can never make us interpret *some* as “none”
- So if Bonnefon’s results are because of people not doing implicatures, then people’s likelihood of interpreting *some* as “none” should be unaffected (because it’s not an implicature)
- But if the results are just because people think the speaker is lying, then people might sometimes think nobody loved/hated the poem (because they just don’t believe the speaker)

Design

	Question about “all” (replicating BFV2009)	Question about “none”
Face boost	...some people loved THING. <i>Is it possible that everyone loved THING?</i>	...some people loved THING. <i>Is it possible that nobody loved THING?</i>
Face threat	...some people hated THING. <i>Is it possible that everyone hated THING?</i>	...some people hated THING. <i>Is it possible that nobody hated THING?</i>

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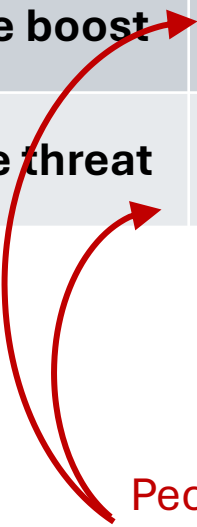
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Under face threat, there's no reason to lie – no reason someone would say *some* if nobody hated it. They're just being mean for no reason.

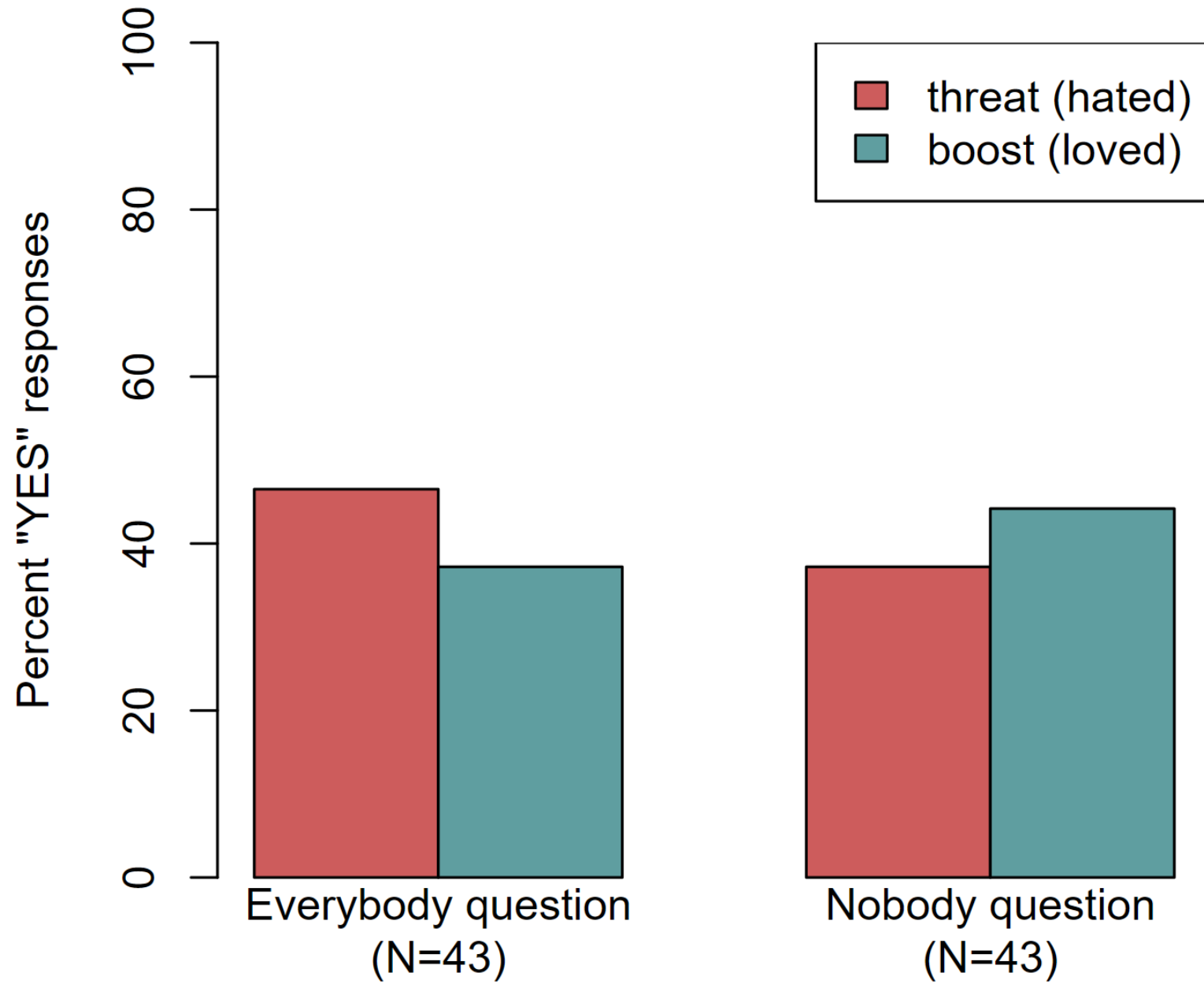
But under face boost, someone could lie to protect your feelings.

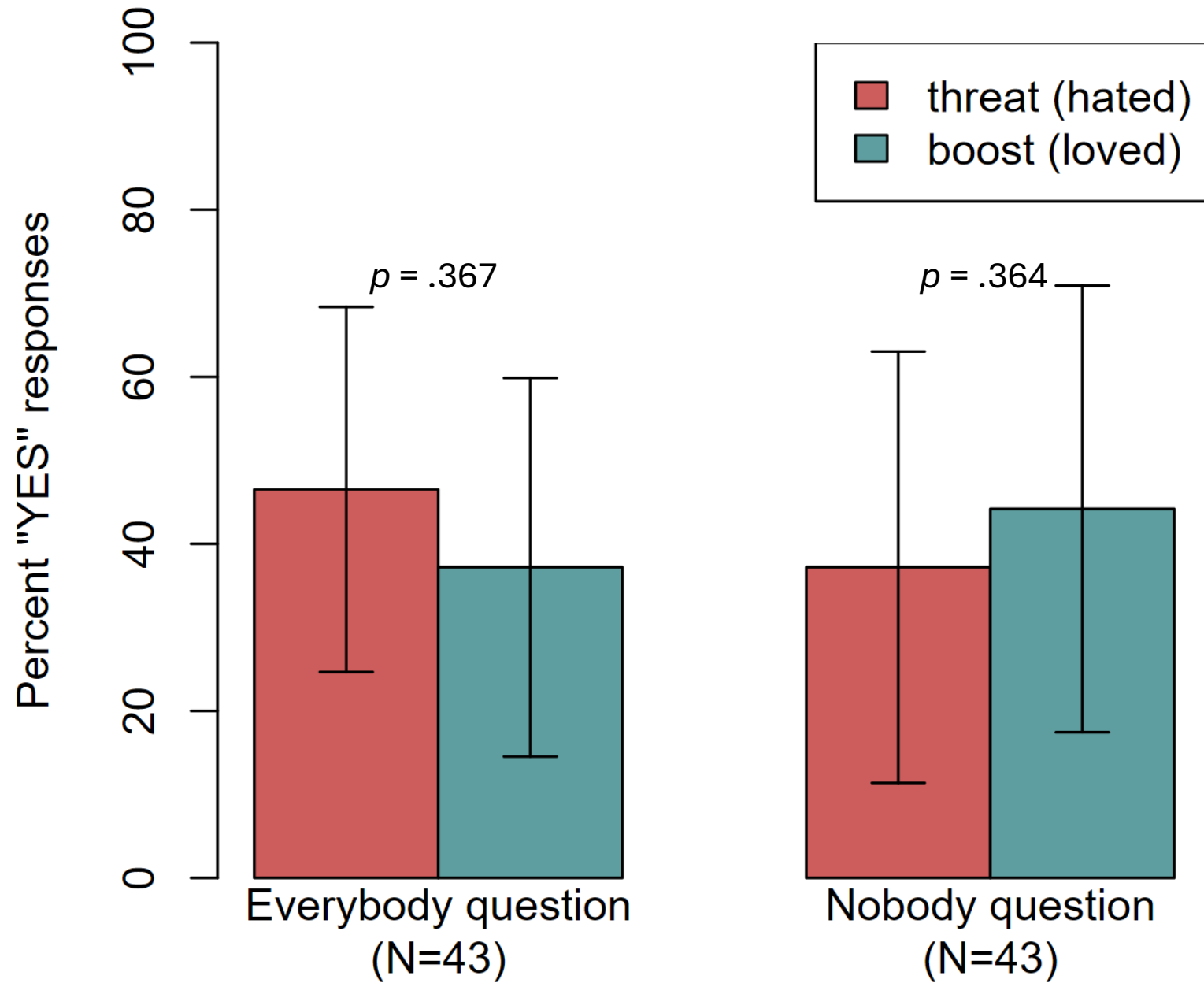
So the white-lie story predicts more YES in the face-boost than face-threat condition.

The implicature story predicts no difference.

Predictions

- **“everyone” question:**
 - Both accounts:
 - Fewer YES responses (i.e., more NO responses) under face-boost than face-threat
- **“nobody” question:**
 - Implicature account:
 - No difference between face-boost and face-threat
 - White-lie account:
 - More YES responses under face-boost than face-threat





Conclusions

- Failed to replicate Bonnefon et al. (2009)
 - With slightly lower (but overall similar) N, no significant trend towards fewer scalar implicatures in face-threat, although the pattern is numerically there
- Numerical pattern supports the white-lying account, rather than Bonnefon and colleagues' reduced-implicature account
- Either way, challenges the notion that face-threat reduces implicatures (but results are super inconclusive)
- Next steps: bigger sample, one item per participant

Thank you!

We hope some of you loved this talk!

Example stimulus

- **Face boost:** ... After the discussion, one fellow member confides to you that 'Some people loved your poem.'
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Example stimulus

- **Face boost:** ... After the discussion, one fellow member confides to you that ‘Some people **loved** your poem.’
From what this fellow member told you, is it possible that nobody loved your poem?
- Under the implicature story, people should say “no” (“some” always rules out “none”; this is not an implicature, “some people” can never mean “nobody”)
- Under the white-lie story, people could say “yes” (because they think the speaker is just lying)