

## Generating Credibility in a Crisis: Will an AI Scripted Response be Accepted?

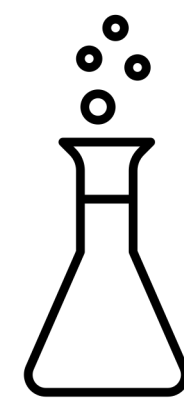
### Hypotheses

When an organization communicates in a crisis, AI disclosure (a) & perception of AI-generation (b) will negatively affect:  
(H1a-b) message credibility  
(H2a-b) attribution of responsibility.

Message credibility (H3) and attribution of responsibility (H4) will mediate message acceptance.

What are the effects of AI-disclosure/perception on reputation (RQ)?

### Method



Online Between-Subjects Experiment  
Pretest ▶ Stimuli ▶ Posttest

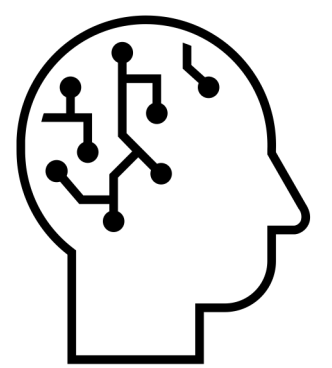
### Participants & Procedure

Undergrads ( $n = 323$ ) read vignette about:

- A victim crisis (shooting) *or*
- An accidental crisis (data breach)

Then reviewed:

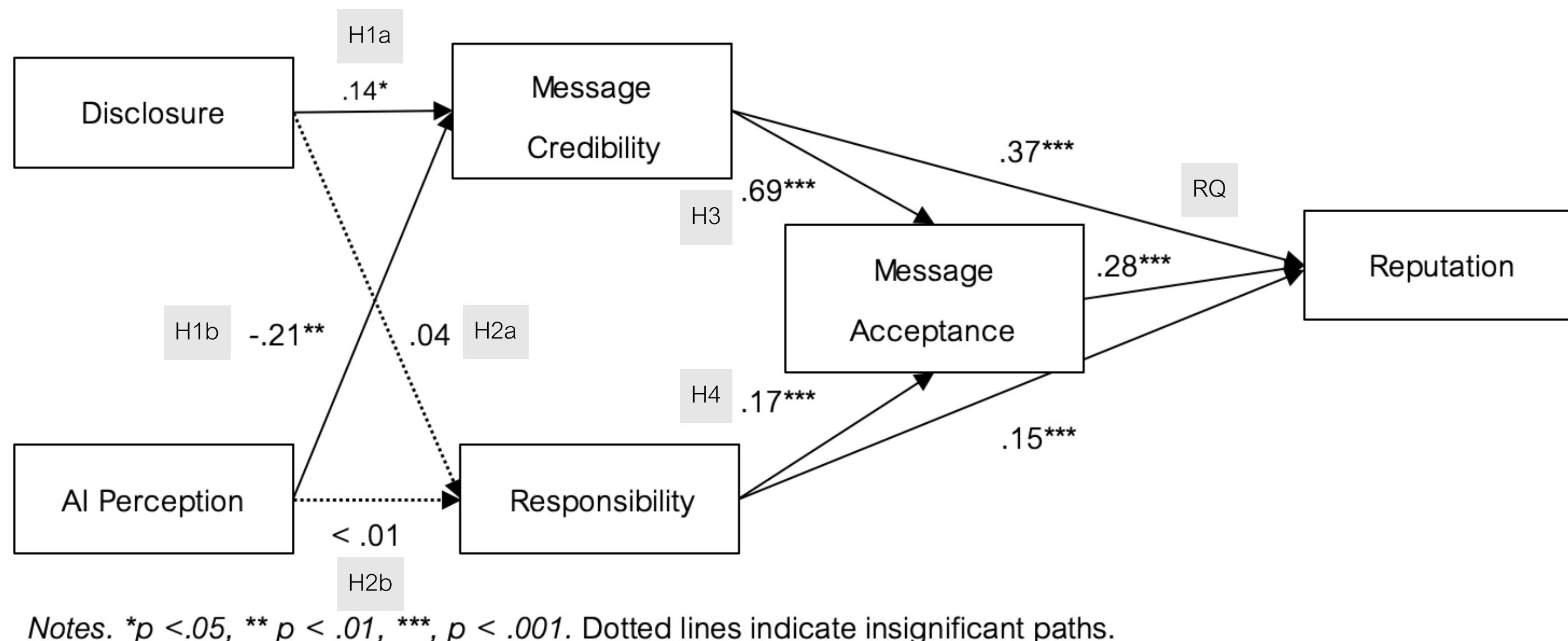
- Crisis response labeled AI *or*
- Crisis response *not* labeled as AI



Then answered a questionnaire.

### Results

Figure 1.  
Path analysis results



"I think AI can [be] used either for good or for evil. It's a tool that can help some but also hurt a lot of people. It makes life more convenient but at what cost... It's such a complex situation and I'm hesitant to pick a side about how I feel about using AI just cause I see both sides of the coin."  
- Participant, 21-year-old female

### Discussion

Young adults remain suspicious of crisis response messages crafted by AI, but disclosure (e.g., labeling) may reduce uncertainty about message credibility and increase message acceptance. Theoretically, results advance aspects of SCCT (Coombs, 2022) through the causal investigation of AI's crisis response effectiveness.

Strategic communicators who are transparent, should consider AI a tool rather than human replacement when trying to generating credibility in crisis.

### Future Directions

- Vary channels, sources & modalities
- Examine additional meaningful outcome variables
- Under review *International Journal of Strategic Communication*

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