

Belief Consistency as a Mediator of Mere Thought and Schema Tuning Effects on Attitude Polarization

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Introduction

Mere Thought Effect

- Thoughts polarize attitudes (Clarkson, Valente, Leone, & Tormala, 2013; Tesser, 1978)
- Initially positive attitudes → more positive after thinking
- Initially negative attitudes → more negative after thinking
- Attitude change = (f) thinking time (Leone, 1984; Tesser & Conlee, 1975)

Schema

Role in the mere thought effect (Tesser, Martin, & Mendolia, 1995)

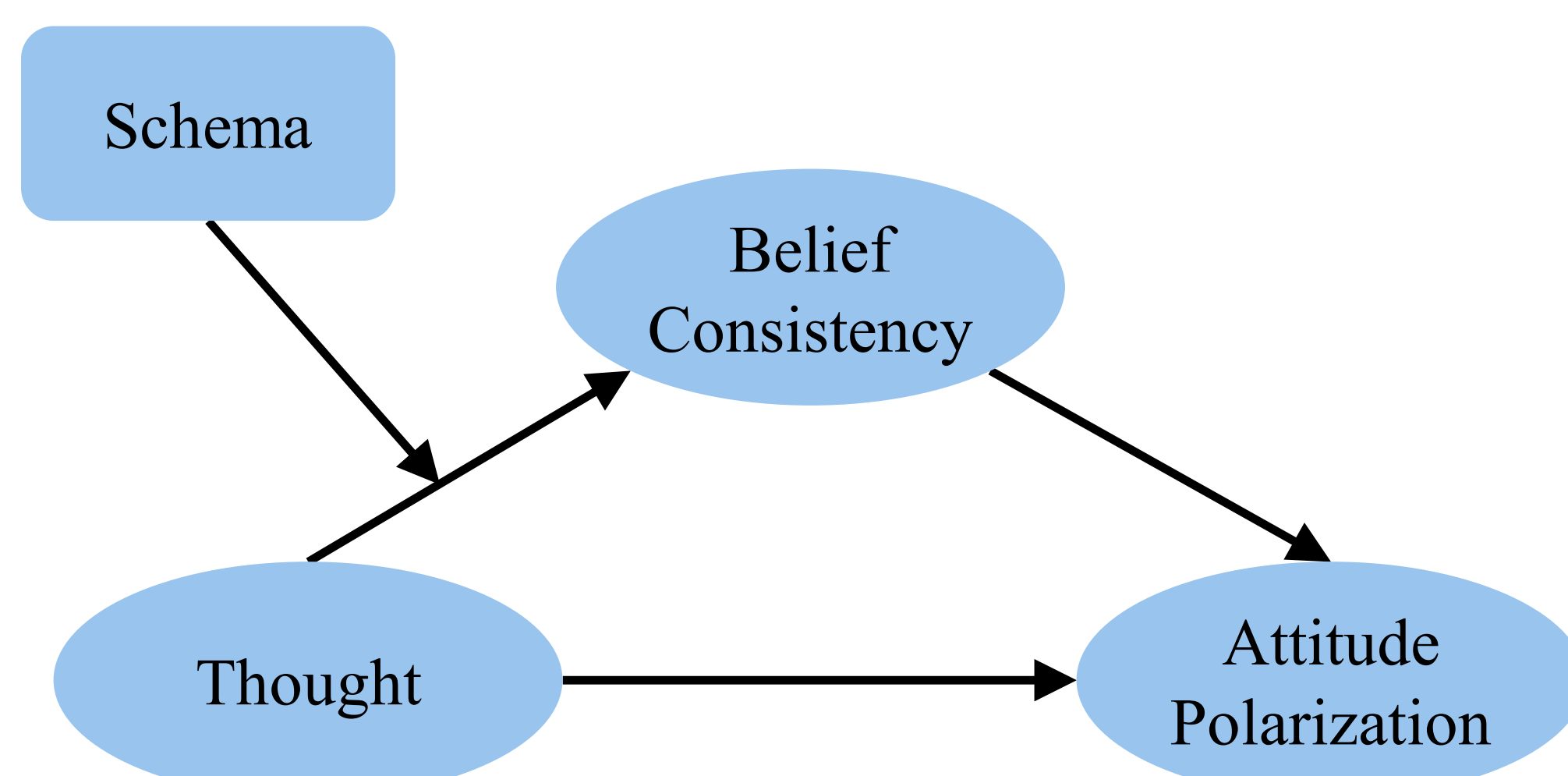
- Well-developed schema (Leone & Ensley, 1985; Millar & Tesser, 1986)
 - Example – individuals
 - Enhanced attitude polarization
- Poorly-developed schema (Leone & Ensley, 1985; Millar & Tesser, 1986)
 - Example – groups
 - Diminished attitude polarization

Thought and Attitude-Related Beliefs

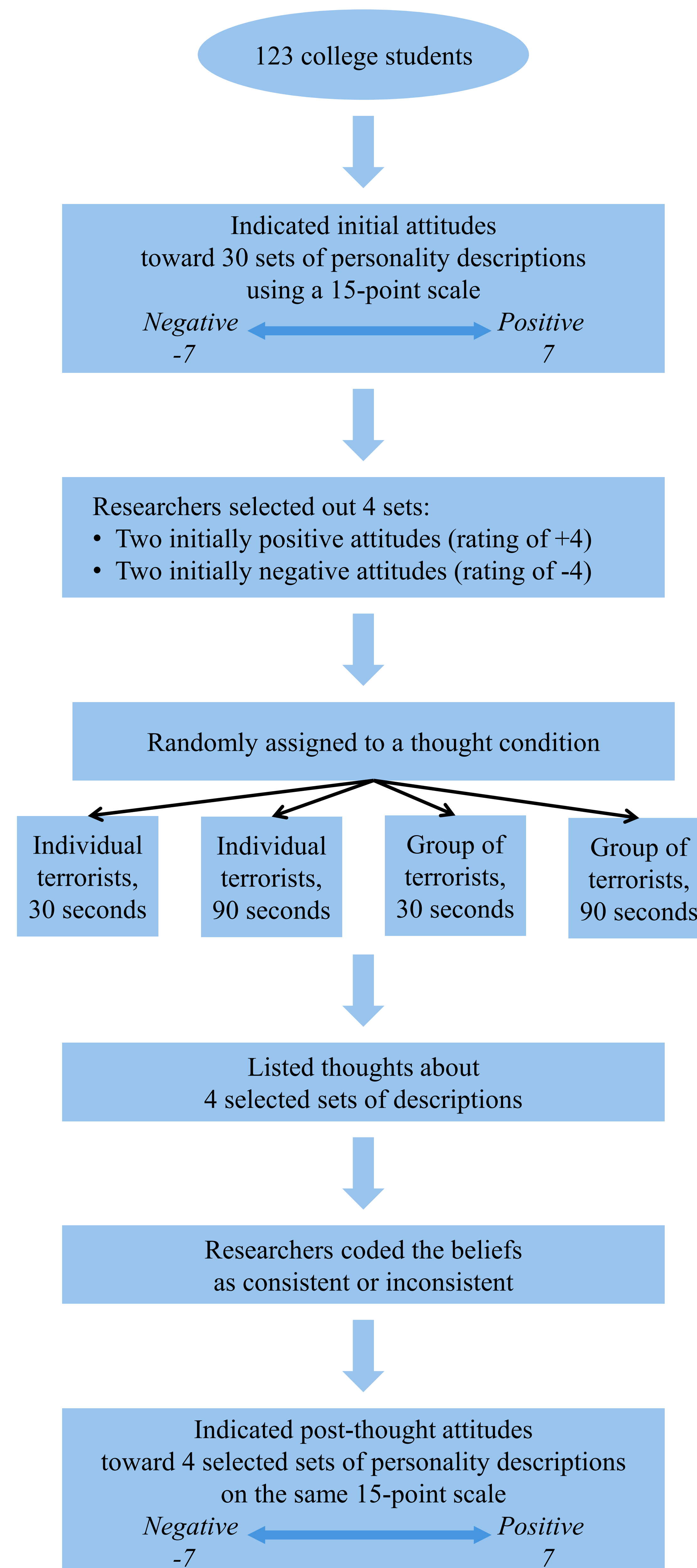
- Attitudes = (f) beliefs (Tesser, 1978)
- Microprocesses (Tesser et al. 1995)
 - Generating new beliefs
 - Reinterpreting ambiguous beliefs
 - Discounting inconsistent beliefs

Hypothesis

Schemas will moderate the mediating role of belief consistency in the mere thought effect.

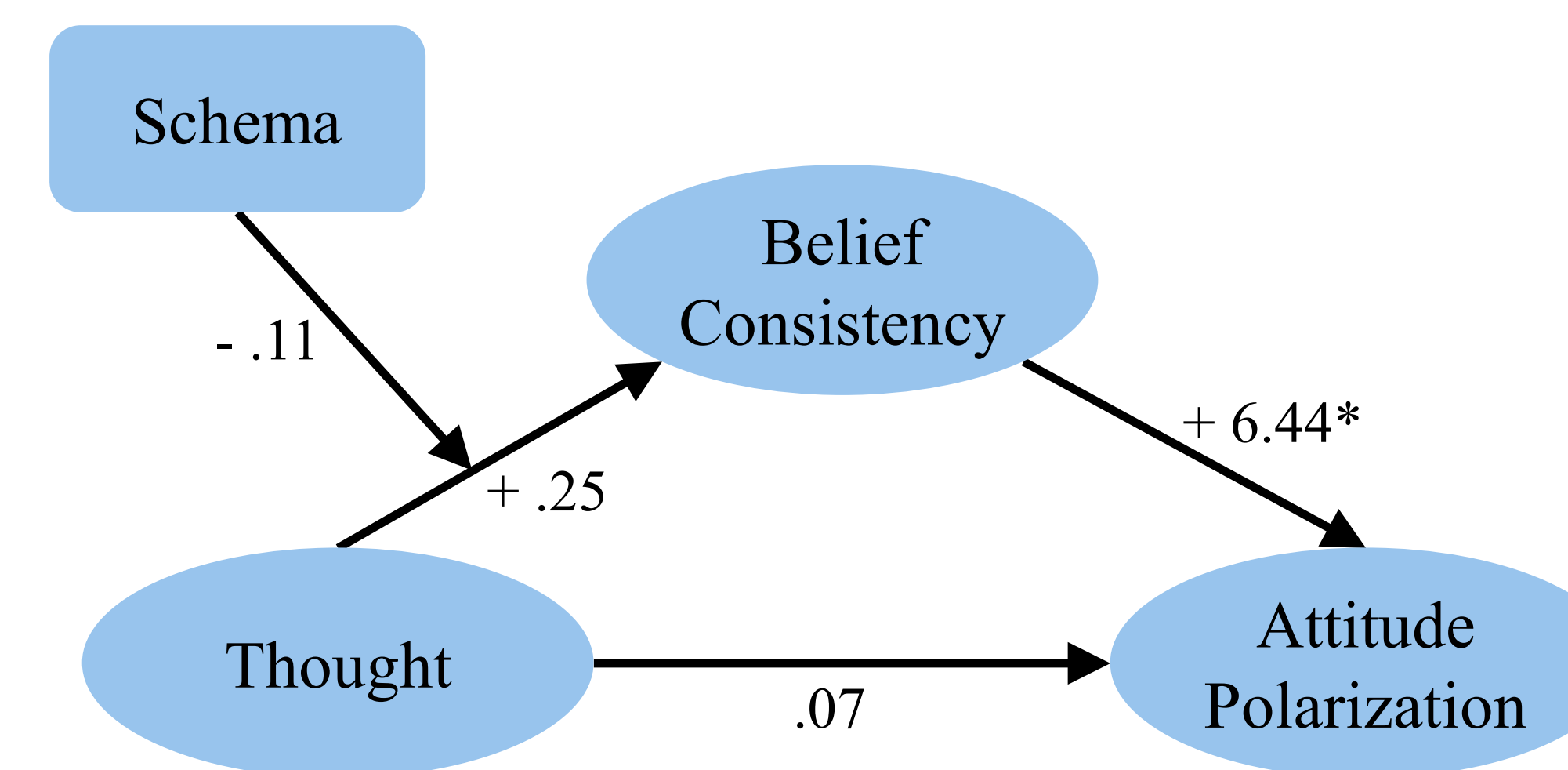


Method



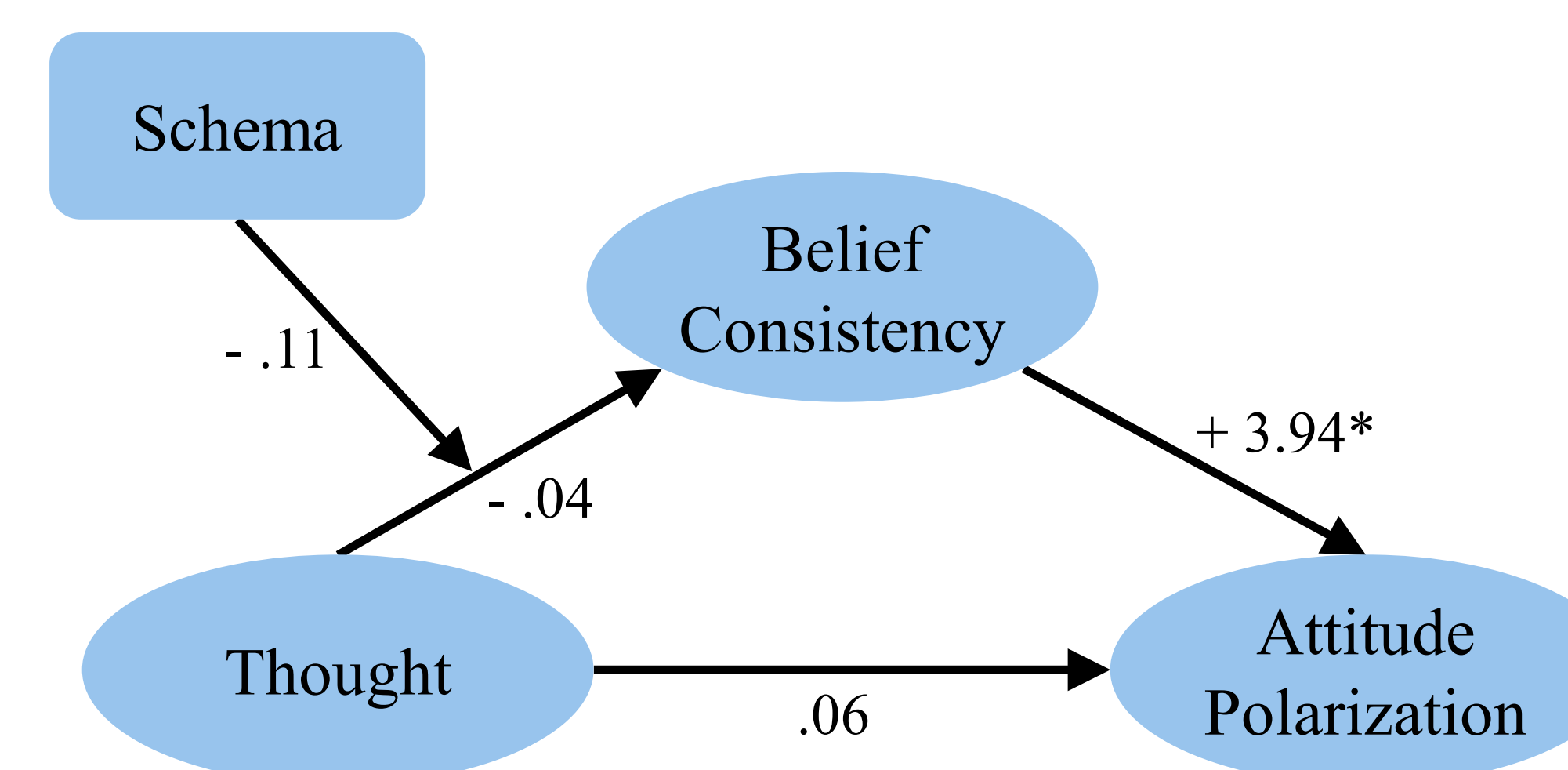
Results

Initially Positive Attitudes



	β	SE	95% CI
Direct Effect	+ 0.07	0.89	- 1.69, + 1.84
Conditional Indirect Effects			
Individuals	+ 0.95	1.07	- 1.18, + 0.18
Groups	+ 0.25	1.02	- 1.69, + 2.29

Initially Negative Attitudes



	β	SE	95% CI
Direct Effect	+ 0.06	0.71	- 1.34, + 1.45
Conditional Indirect Effects			
Individuals	- 0.59	0.46	- 1.68, + 0.18
Groups *	- 1.02	0.54	- 2.20, - 0.05

Discussion

Conclusions

- Belief consistency as mere thought mediator - only for initially negative attitudes
- Effect of individual vs. group schemas - opposite of predictions
 - Mere thought effect - only for groups
 - More thought → less consistency → less attitude polarization

Limitations

- Assessment of thought: Thinking time vs. Number of thoughts
- Nature of sample
- Choice of attitude object: Terrorists

Future Directions

- Operationalization of “thought”
- Types of schemas and associated attitudes
- Other mediators (e.g., Belief Confidence)
- Dispositional moderators (e.g., Fear of Invalidity, Need for Cognition, Intolerance of Ambiguity)

