

Can apology be a breakthrough in negative verbal fights?

Ayane KUWAJIMA

School of Law, Kobe University, Japan.

Motivations and Hypothesis

- ▶ What type of message is the most effective for gaining support from foreign public, or the international society, in situations where disputing countries compete in diplomatic campaigns? Kohama, Inamasu and Tago (2017) uncover that a negative accusation acquires the highest public support for a state issuing the negative accusation message compared with being silent and self-promotion. Since this structure is similar to the one-shot prisoner's dilemma, verbal fights tend to escalate undesirably.
- ▶ This study, through a new survey experiment, examined the effect of apology compared with negative accusation (denouncement) and self-promotion. *We expected apology to outweigh negative accusation, breaking the deadlock of negative verbal fights. Consequently, we observed the effect of apology to a small extent. Besides, apology might change impression toward the country.*

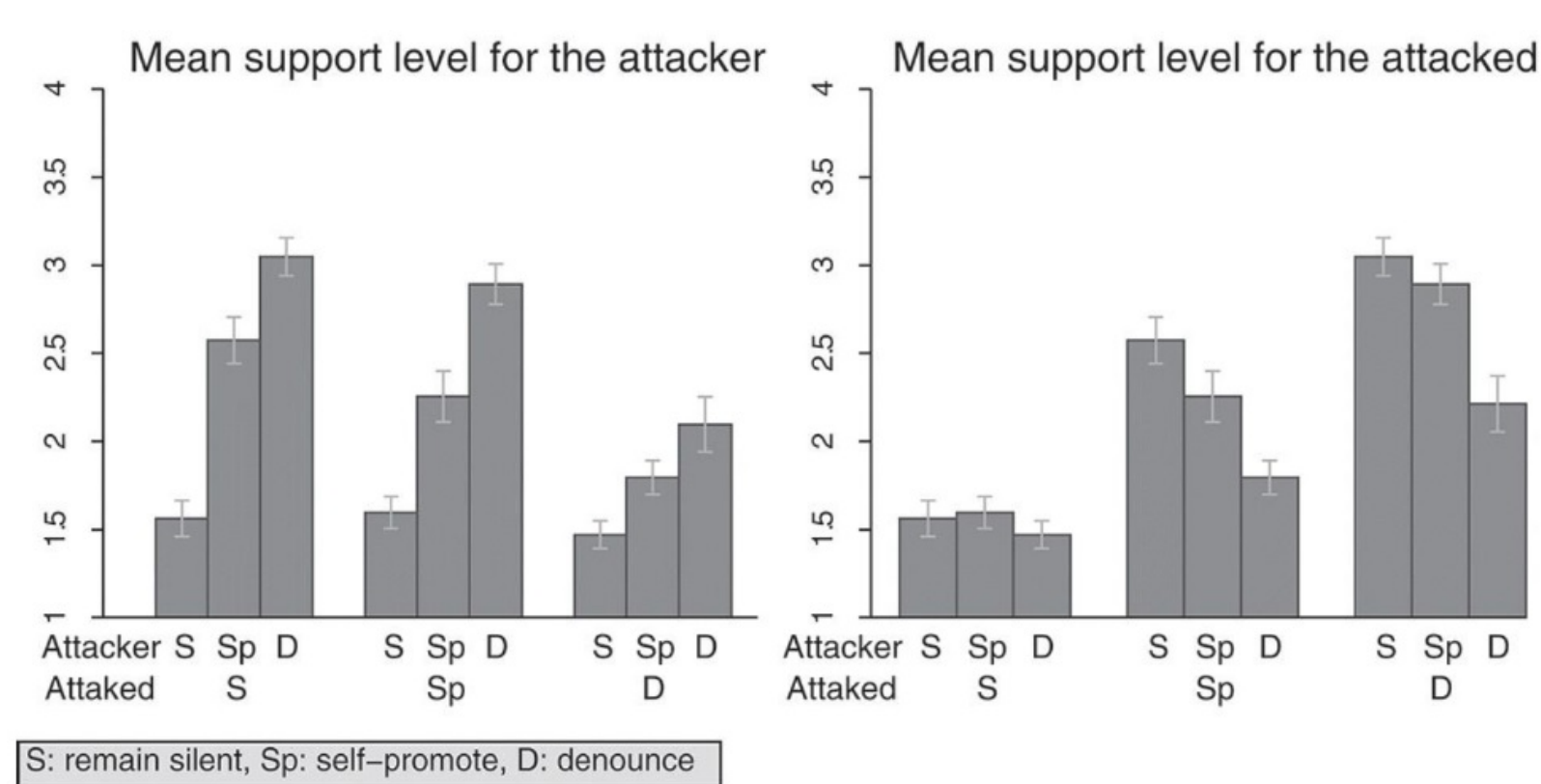


Fig. 1: Figure from Kohama et.al 2017

Design of Experiment

- ▶ We conducted an Internet-based, between-subjects survey experiment. A total of 1,664 people residing in Japan participated in the experiment via the Internet. Our sample involved a wide range of population in terms of age, gender, income level, educational background and ideology and our randomized experiment did not aim to acquire a representative sample (However, we did run a series of supplementary analyses to verify the internal and external validity of our study, a part of which is reported later.)
- ▶ Country A and Country B maintain conflicting territorial claims over land and sea. They also contest over airspace, leading to an increasing number of cases where fighter jets of the countries fly simultaneously in the disputed airspace. As a result, a "near-miss" incident recently occurred where their fighter jets approached very close to each other. Following the incident, the government of each country publicized the following announcements.
- ▶ Participants are randomly assigned a message from each side of the disputing countries, which adopts one of the following tones: denouncing the other side, self-promotion itself, or apologizing to the other side. We constructed six pairs of message and assigned to participants. After reading, each participants reports their support level for each country, choosing from "support", "somewhat support", "somewhat oppose", and "oppose".

Implementation of Experiment

Experiment was done for 15-16 July 2017. Yahoo Crowdsourcing (a service like AmazonMturk) was used. Also, Qualtrics was used to operate experiments (random assignment) and gather data.

Results

- ▶ Figure 2. The upper chart (estimation by Simple OLS) shows a positive effect of issuing negative campaign against self-promotion.

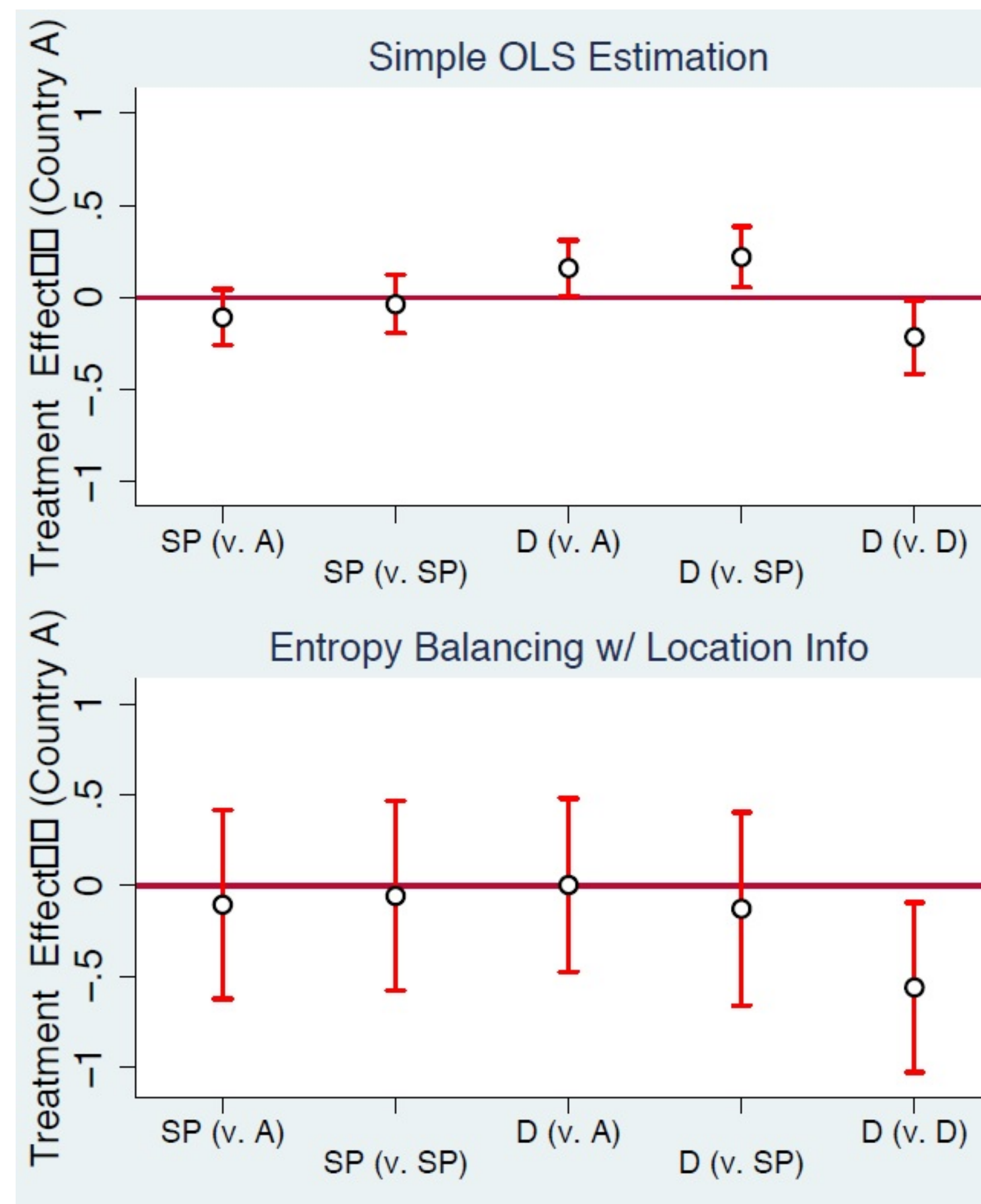


Fig. 2: Results(A)

- ▶ Figure 3. The lower chart (estimation with Entropy-balancing) indicates that apology has slightly effective to denouncement. In entropy balancing, apology has stronger effect to gain support from foreign domestic audience.
- ▶ Without amendment, negative accusation is the most effective to gain support.

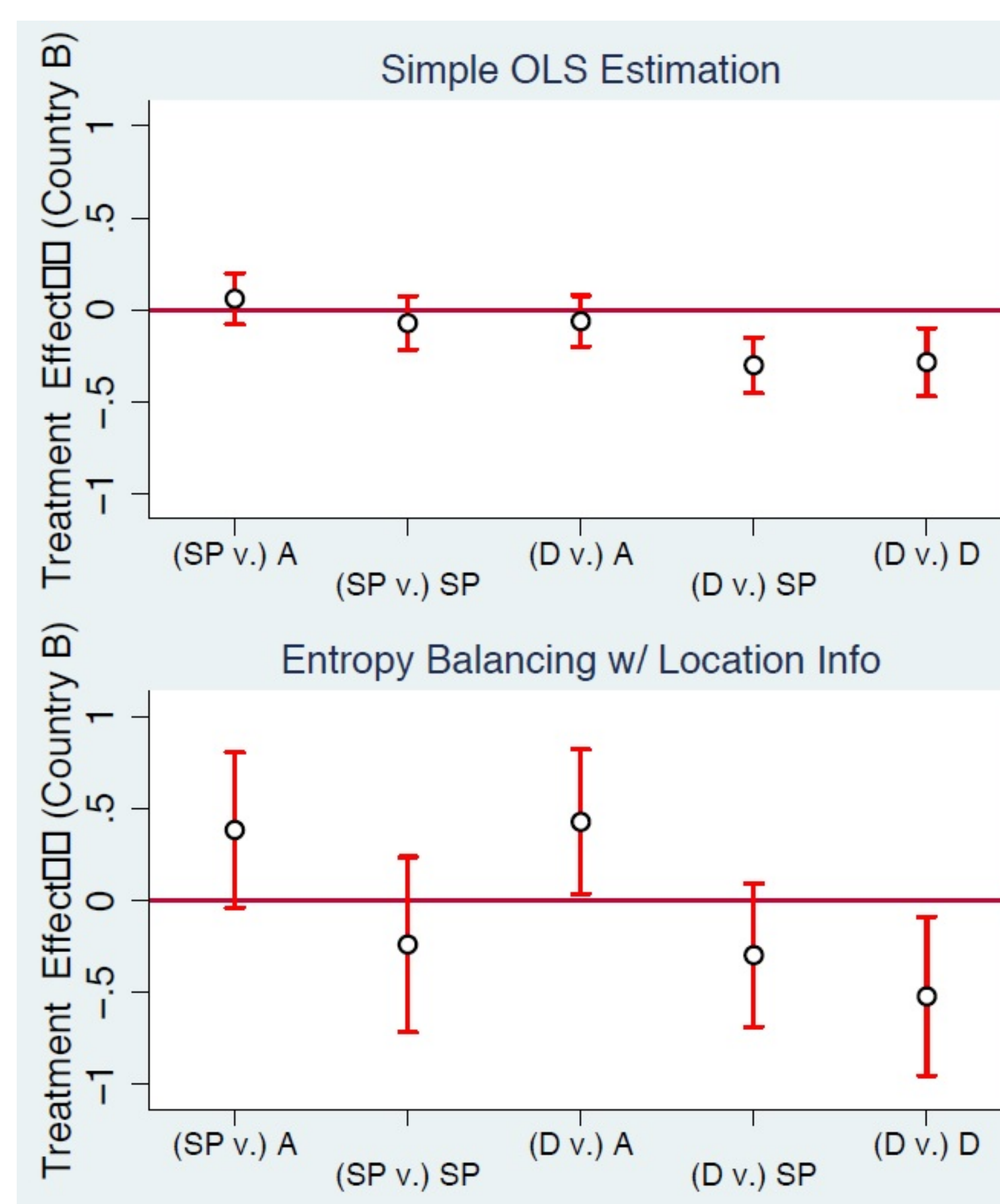


Fig. 3: Results(B)

Note: Whiskers indicate 90% CI.

- 1664 respondents were gathered.
- The respondents were gathered with our commitment to pay 15 yen if they are successfully finishing the task.

Results (cont.)

- ▶ Figure 4. When the attacked side selects either self-promotion or denouncement, *the attacker's apology is seen as "honest" and "providing accurate information"*.

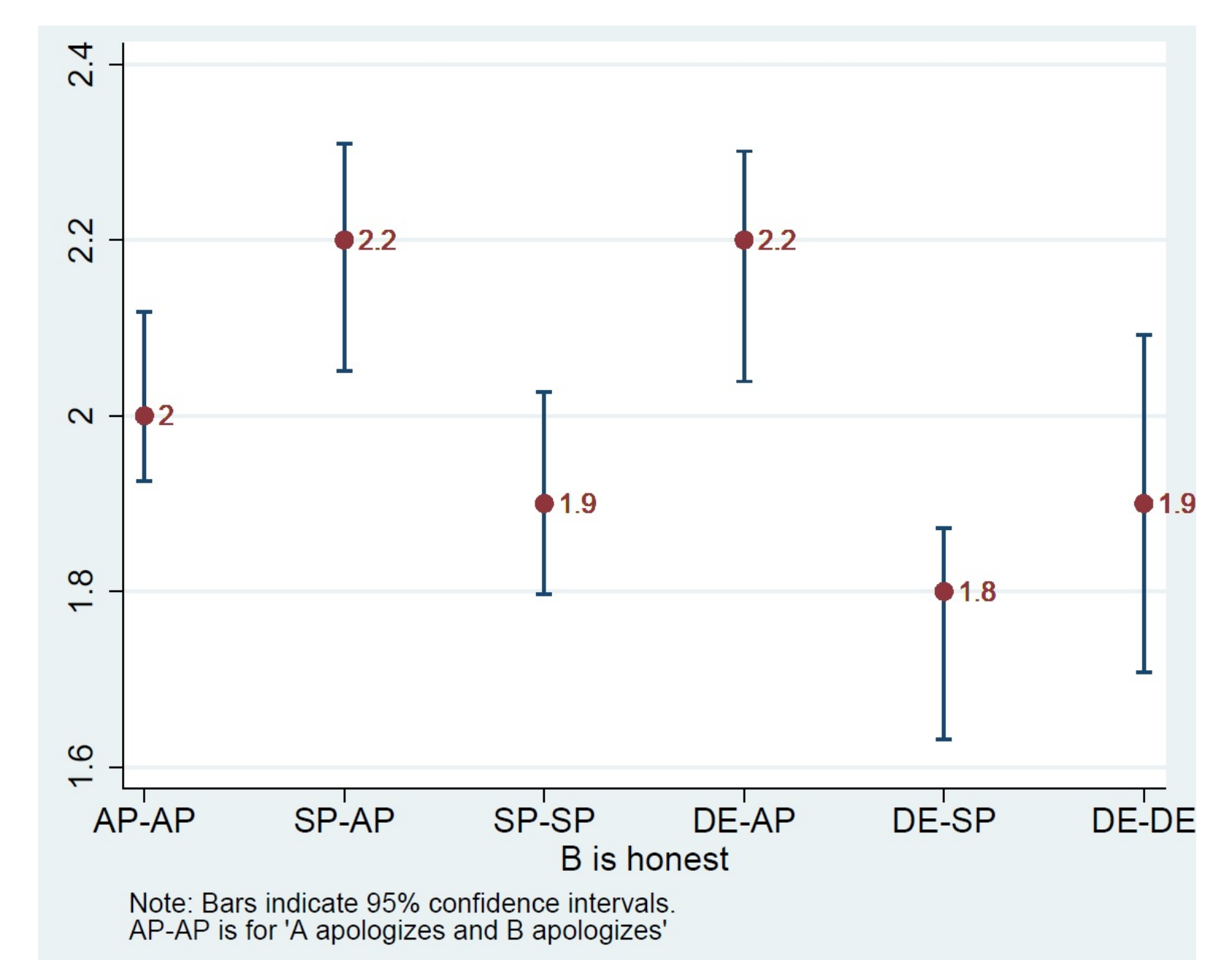


Fig. 4: Results(C)

Conclusion

- ▶ Apology could foster a favorable image toward a country issuing such an apology message; apology could convey an impression of being honest and providing the accurate information. This effects is valid when the other side publicize other messages.
- ▶ Although apology gains support from foreign public, its effect does not reach statistical significance.
- ▶ Through this survey, we succeeded in duplicating what Kohama, Inamasu and Tago (2017) have found. The effect of denouncement for gaining support is entrenched.

Reference and Project Info.

Shoko Kohama, Kazunori Inamasu Atsushi Tago (2017) To Denounce, or Not To Denounce: Survey Experiments on Diplomatic Quarrels, Political Communication, 34:2,243-260, DOI: 10.1080/10584609.2016.1200700
The study based on Kohama, Inamasu and Tago (2017) had appeared in Monkey Cage;



CROP-IT project

School of Law, Kobe University, Japan
657-8501 2-1. Rokkodaicho
Nada-ward, Kobe-city, Hyogo, Japan
<http://www2.kobe-u.ac.jp/tago/cropit/>