

# **Crisis Nearby or Faraway:** Exploring the Influences of Psychological Distance of Crisis

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# Background

- Previous research on crisis communication focuses on identifying the nature of crisis
- Organization's and publics' appraisal of crisis determine crisis response strategies
- The nature of crisis still needs further exploration



# Research Purpose

- To develop a new framework to understand the nature of crisis
- To apply the concept of psychological distance to crisis contexts
- To suggest how to tailor crisis communication strategies depending on different perceived crisis distances

# Construal Level Theory

- Levels of Construal
  - High-level construal: Distant events (abstract)
  - Low-level construal: Proximal events (concrete)
- Psychological Distance
  - **Temporal** Distance: Proximity in time toward an event
  - **Social** Distance: Personal involvement
  - **Hypothetical** Distance: Likelihood of occurring
  - **Spatial** Distance: Proximity of place (physical location)
- Individuals have distinct psychological associations with events based on their perceived distance.

# Psychological Distance of Crisis

- **Temporal** distance: between now and when the reputational damages are realized
- **Social** distance: between a crisis and organizational reputation
- **Hypothetical** distance: the likelihood of reputational damages affecting to an organization
- **Spatial** distance: between a crisis and an individual's geographical location

# Crisis Outcomes

- Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2002)
  - Crisis responsibility
  - Organizational reputation
- Organizational confidence (Cloudman & Hallahan, 2006)
  - Confidence in an organization's crisis coping ability
  - Explaining crisis preparedness of an organization
- Crisis threat appraisal (Jin & Cameron, 2007)
  - Primary appraisal of situational demands
  - Secondary appraisal of resources
- Crisis emotions (Jin et al., 2014)

# Research Questions



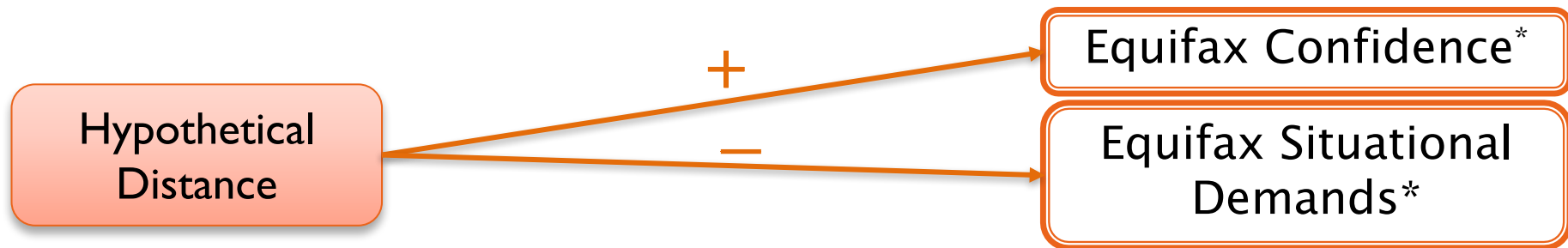
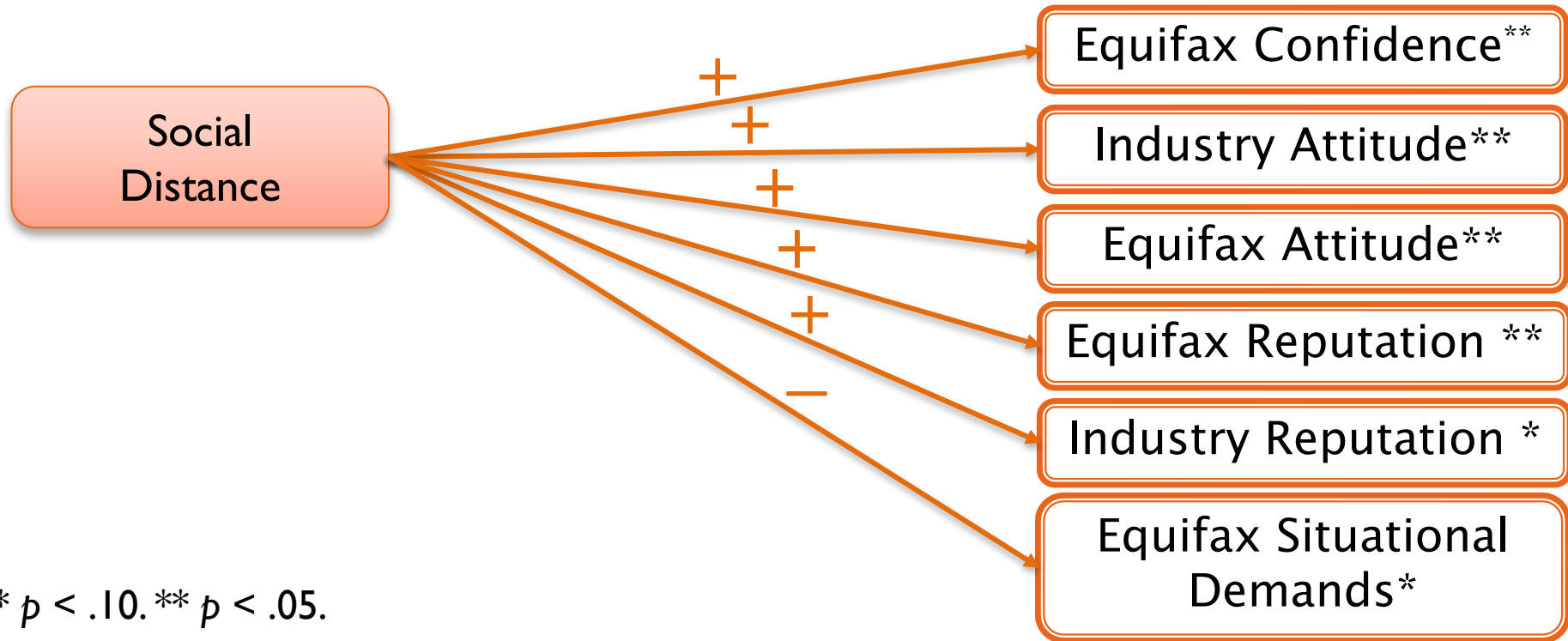
# Exploratory Research

- Online survey
- Sample: Crisis communication executives and scholars (N = 25)
- Crisis case: Equifax data breach in 2017
- Measures
  - Distance between the crisis and Equifax's and financial industry
  - Crisis outcomes with regard to Equifax and financial industry



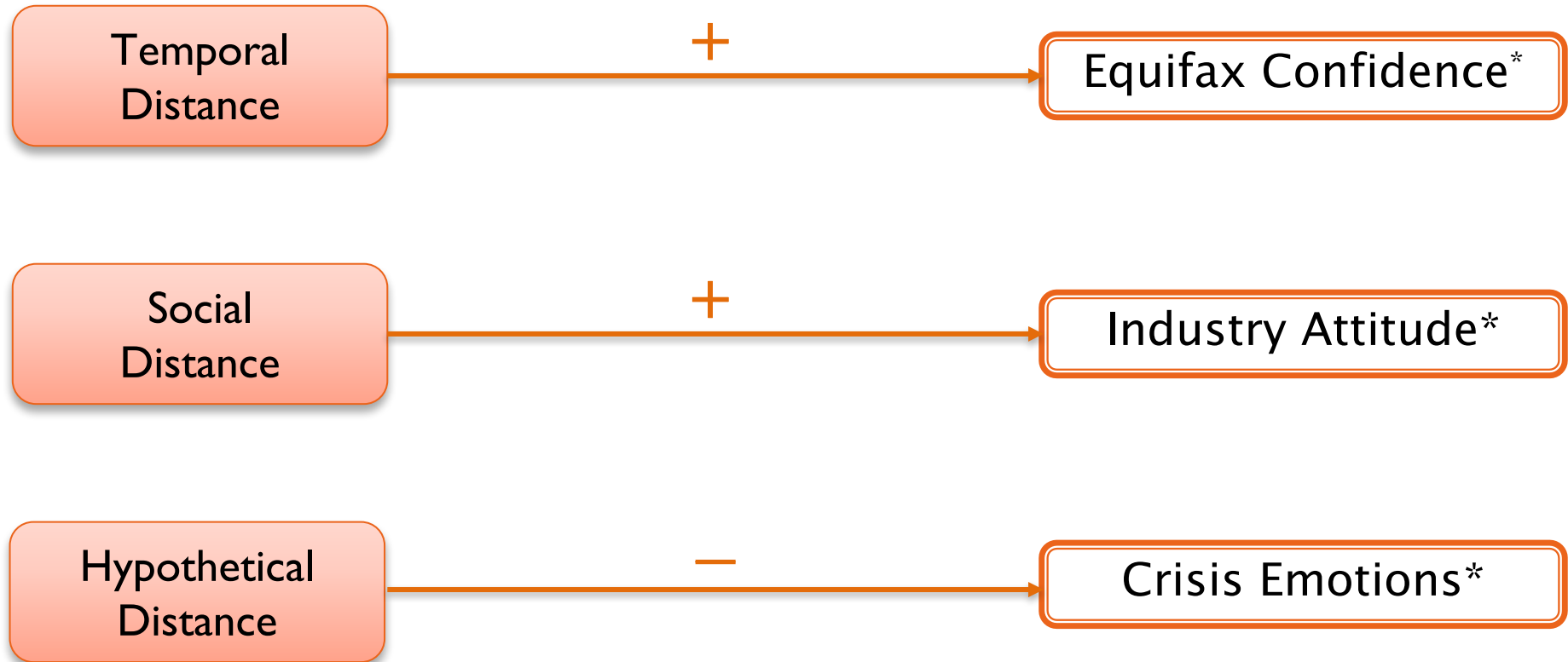
# Results:

## Distance with regard to Equifax



# Results:

## Distance with regard to financial industry



\*  $p < .10$ . \*\*  $p < .05$ .

# Discussion

- Strategic role of psychological distance toward organizational crisis
- Psychological distance of crisis as a new factor to discern the nature of crisis
- Suggests a new direction for organization's crisis response strategies based on psychological distance toward a crisis
- Limitations and Future Directions
  - Sample number of a convenient sample
  - Perspective of practitioners and scholars
  - Need to understand how publics perceive different crisis distances and their expectations of organizational crisis responses

Thank you!