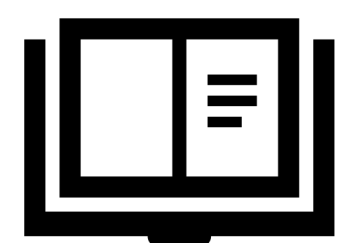


Denial of Death?

Death-Related Words are Suppressed in a Think/No-Think Paradigm

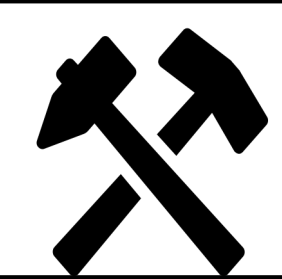
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Background

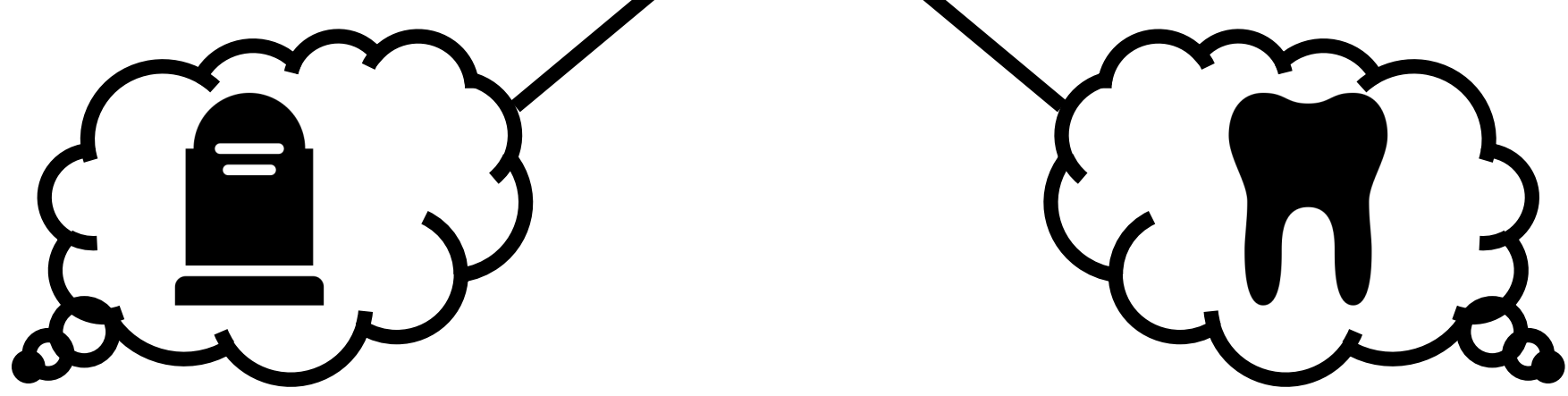
According to terror management theory^[1,2], humans automatically suppress the thought of death when they are reminded of their mortality (*mortality salience*; MS), leading to a hyper-accessibility of death-related thoughts under MS^[3]. We tested this claim of death-thought-suppression using a think/no-think paradigm^[4].



Method

Sample:
63 Students

Priming



Learning Phase



Target Words:
– Death-related
– Animals
– Neutral words

TNT-Phase

THINK



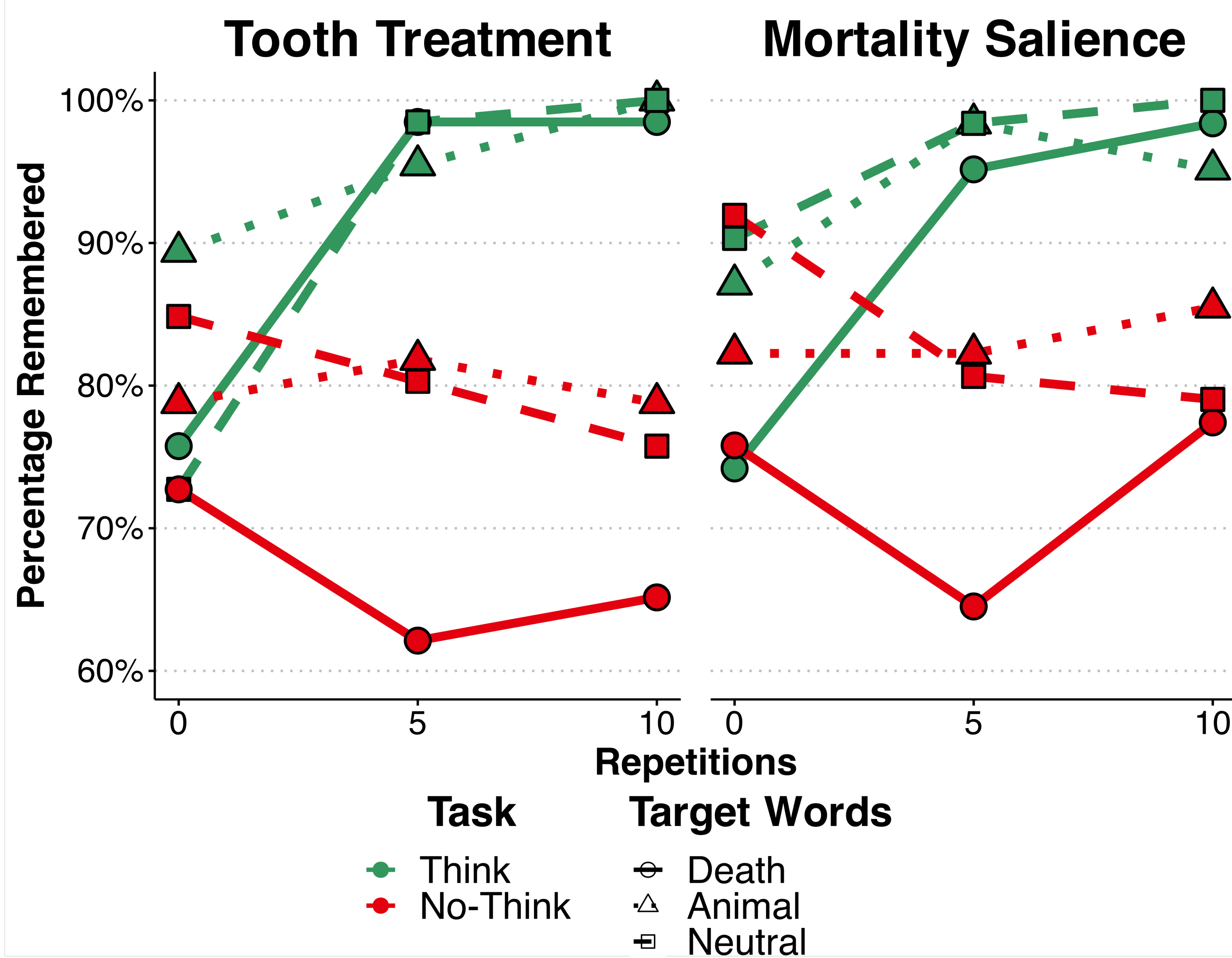
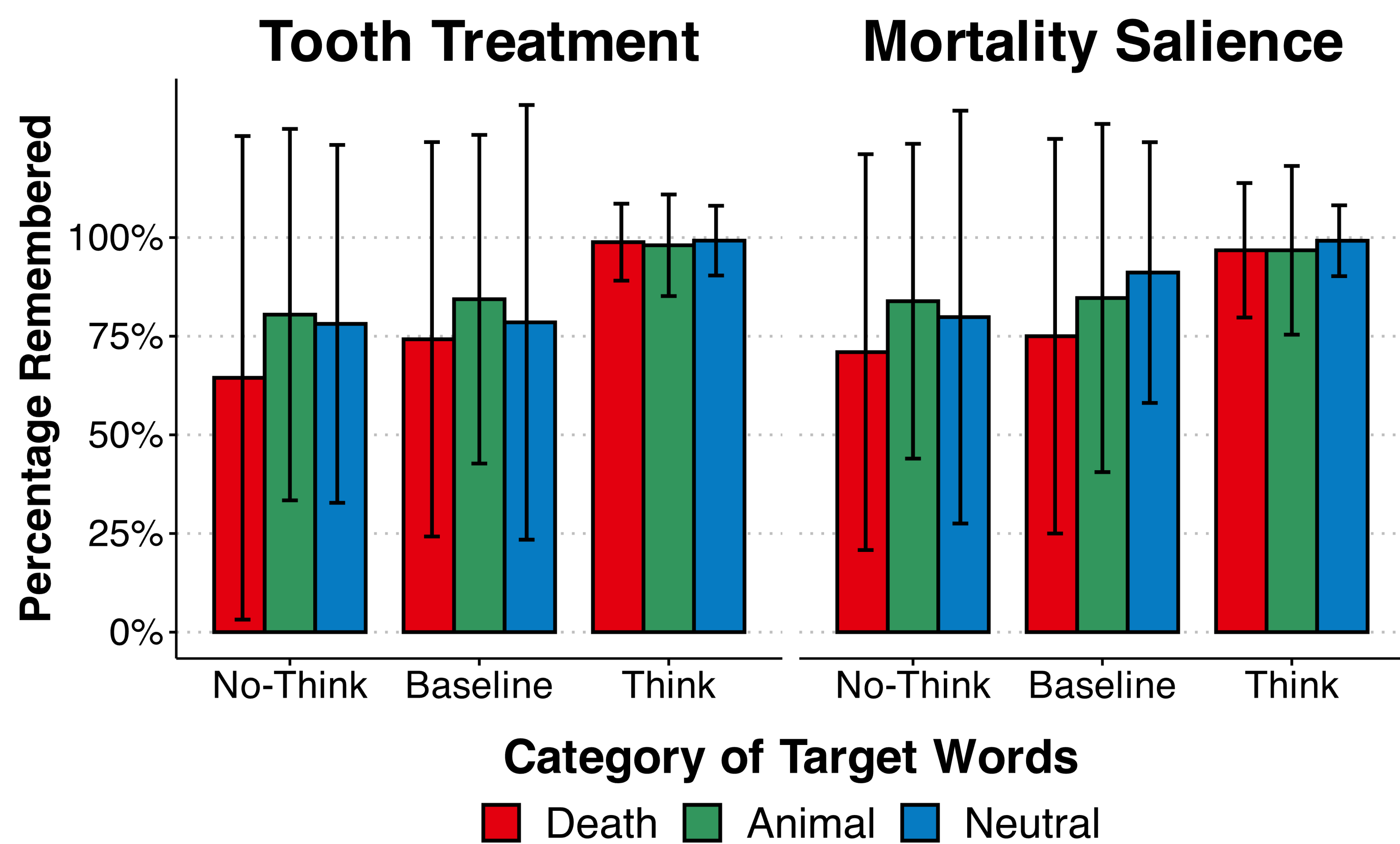
NO-THINK



Test Phase



Results



Discussion

Death-related words are remembered worse than other words - especially after thought-suppression. These effects are independent of MS, showing that death-related words are also without MS automatically suppressed.

References:

- (1) Pyszczynski, T., Solomon, S., & Greenberg, J. (2015). Thirty years of terror management theory: From genesis to revelation. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 52, pp. 1-70). Academic Press.
- (2) Solomon, S., Greenberg, J., & Pyszczynski, T. (1991). A terror management theory of social behavior: The psychological functions of self-esteem and cultural worldviews. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 24, pp. 93-159). Academic Press.
- (3) Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., Solomon, S., Simon, L., & Breus, M. (1994). Role of consciousness and accessibility of death-related thoughts in mortality salience effects. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(4), 627.
- (4) Anderson, M. C., & Green, C. (2001). Suppressing unwanted memories by executive control. *Nature*, 410(6826), 366-369.

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