

Exploring the role of Imagery Rescripting and Imaginal Extinction in Reducing Generalized Threat Expectancies

Sharmili Mitra¹ and Manish Kumar Asthana^{1,2}

¹Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, India

²Department of Design, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, India

INTRODUCTION

- **Imagery Rescripting (ImRS)** and **Imaginal Extinction (IE)** are promising **visual mental imagery-based interventions** for treating anxiety and related disorders.
- **ImRS: UCS devaluation process** in which the participants are asked to **mentally devalue an aversive situation and modify it in a desirable direction**.
- **IE:** Participants are verbally instructed to **vividly imagine the conditioned stimuli ‘before their inner eye’**.
- The impact of ImRS and IE on **reducing generalized conditioned fear responses** has not been investigated.
- The current study aimed to **compare the effectiveness of imagery rescripting (ImRS), imaginal extinction (IE), and standard extinction (SE) in reducing generalized fear responses**.

METHODS

- **Sample size:** Forty-two healthy individuals (M=18.83, SD=0.44); Twenty females and twenty-two males.
- **Outcome measures:** UCS expectancy and valence ratings.

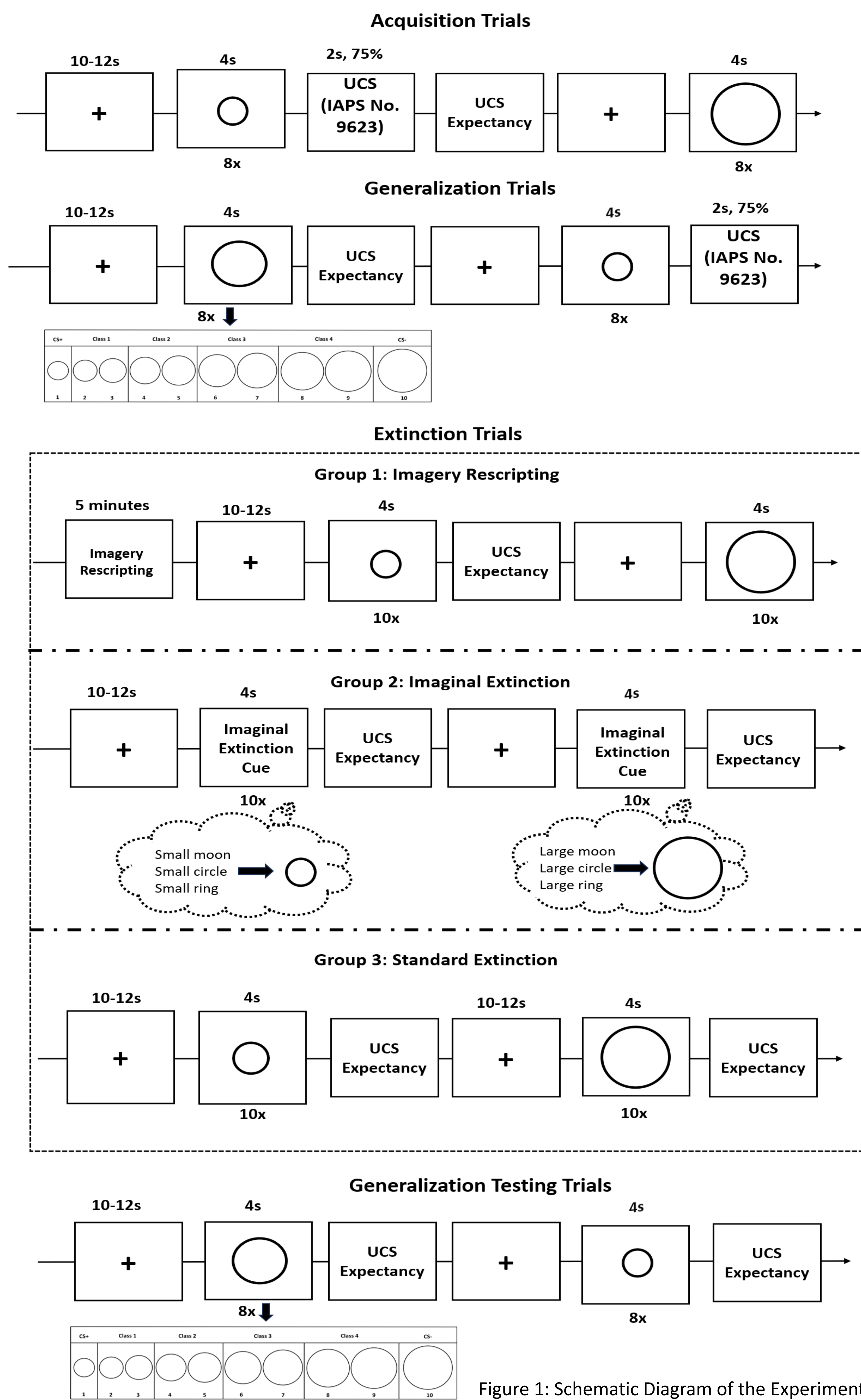
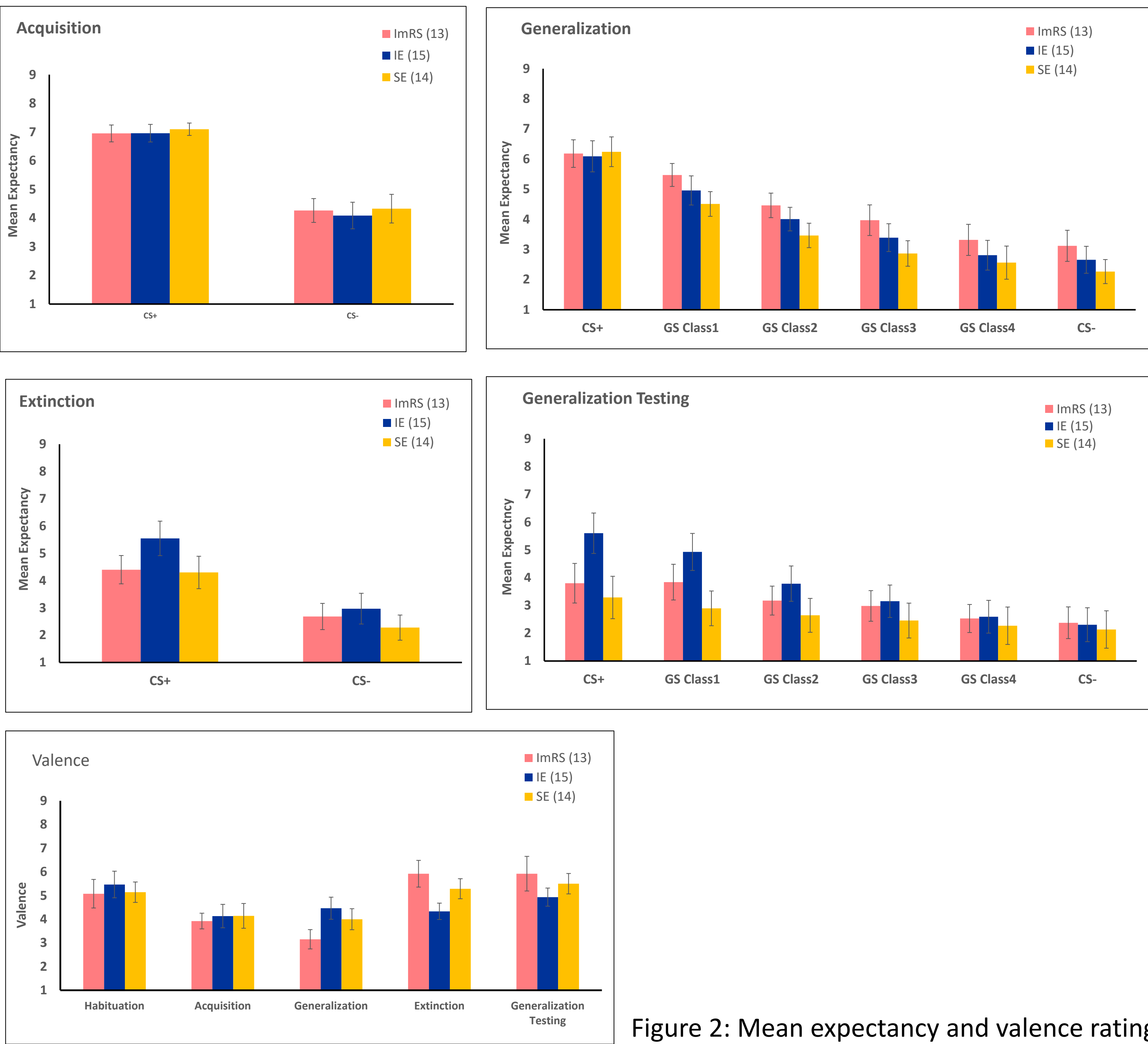


Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of the Experiment

RESULTS



A significant phase x group interaction effect [$F(6,117) = 2.52, p = 0.025, \eta_p^2 = 0.823$] of the CS+ valence was observed

DISCUSSION

- The current study is the **first to explore the effect of imagery rescripting and imaginal extinction on generalized fear**.
- In the generalization phase, fear associated with the CS+ **generalized to the other generalization stimuli with higher expectancy ratings for stimuli similar to the CS+**.
- In the extinction phase, the expectancy ratings for the CSs attenuated, however we did not find any significant group differences.
- In the generalization testing phase, we observed that the **expectancy ratings decreased more for the ImRs and SE groups**.
- However, **in the SE group, the extinction effects were more sustained**, indicating a possibility of return of fear.
- Further, after the extinction phase, **the CS+ valence of the ImRS group was higher than the other two groups**.
- Hence, **ImRS may be more effective in reducing generalized fear as it reduces the threat expectancy through extinction, and increases the CS valence through UCS devaluation**.

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CONTACT: s_mitra@hs.iitr.ac.in; +91 9674803425