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Empirical study of Literature Training Network

Julia de Jonge, MSc.

Limits of Empathy:
The need for a shift in morality
A quantitative approach

Moral shift

Moral shift

Moral disengagement

Self-regulatory mechanisms governing moral conduct do not come into play unless they are activated

Cognitive restructuring of immoral conduct into benign or worthy

(Bandura, 2002)

Moral shift

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Cognitive restructuring of immoral conduct into benign or worthy

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Moral judgement

The evaluation of a certain behaviour as good or bad, or as right or wrong

Judgement of a person's morality vs. immorality highly correlates with the judgement of goodness vs. badness

(Jin & Peng, 2021; Goodwin et al., 2014)

Moral disengagement

Condition
Autobiography vs. Novel

→

Empathy

De Jonge et al., 2022

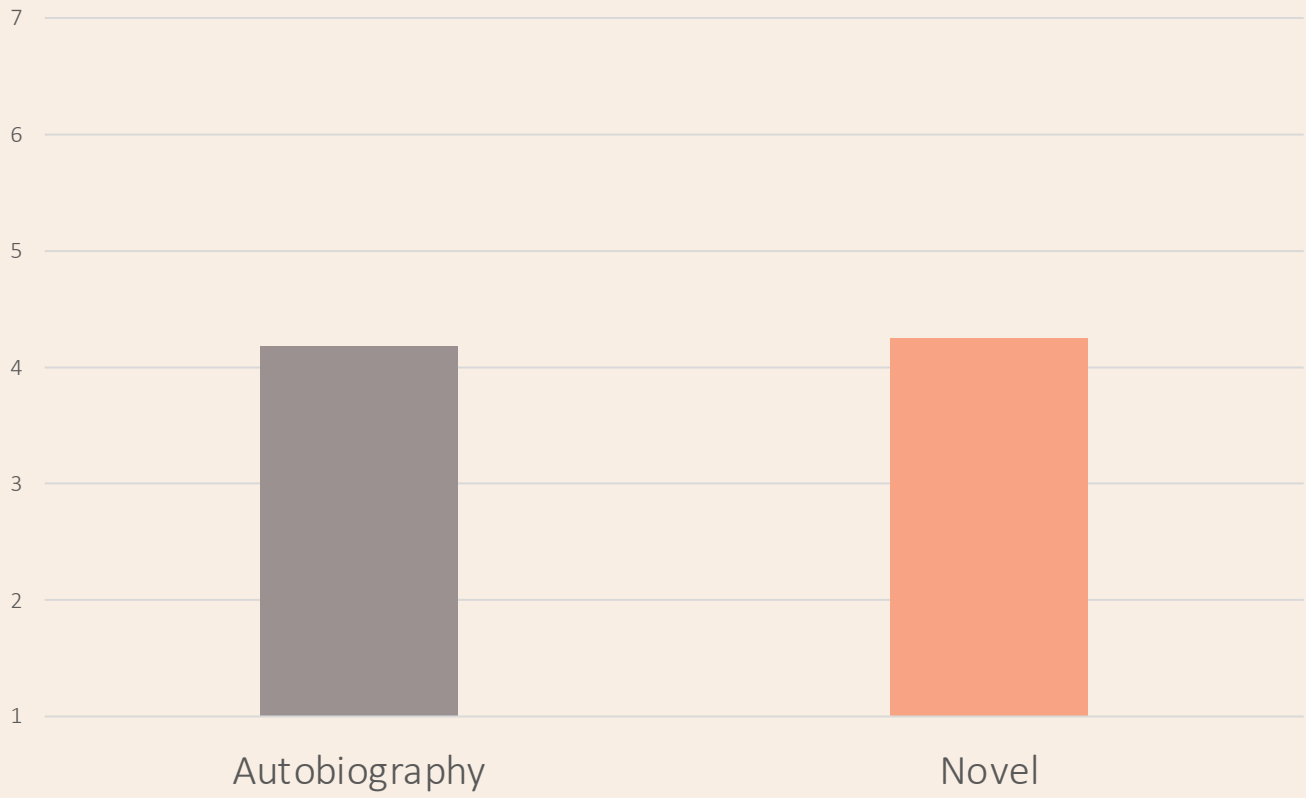
Moral disengagement

Autobiography: M = 4.18, SD = 1.22
Novel: M = 4.25, SD = 1.07

Condition
Autobiography vs. Novel

$t(102) = -0.301$, $p = 0.764$

Empathy



De Jonge et al., 2022

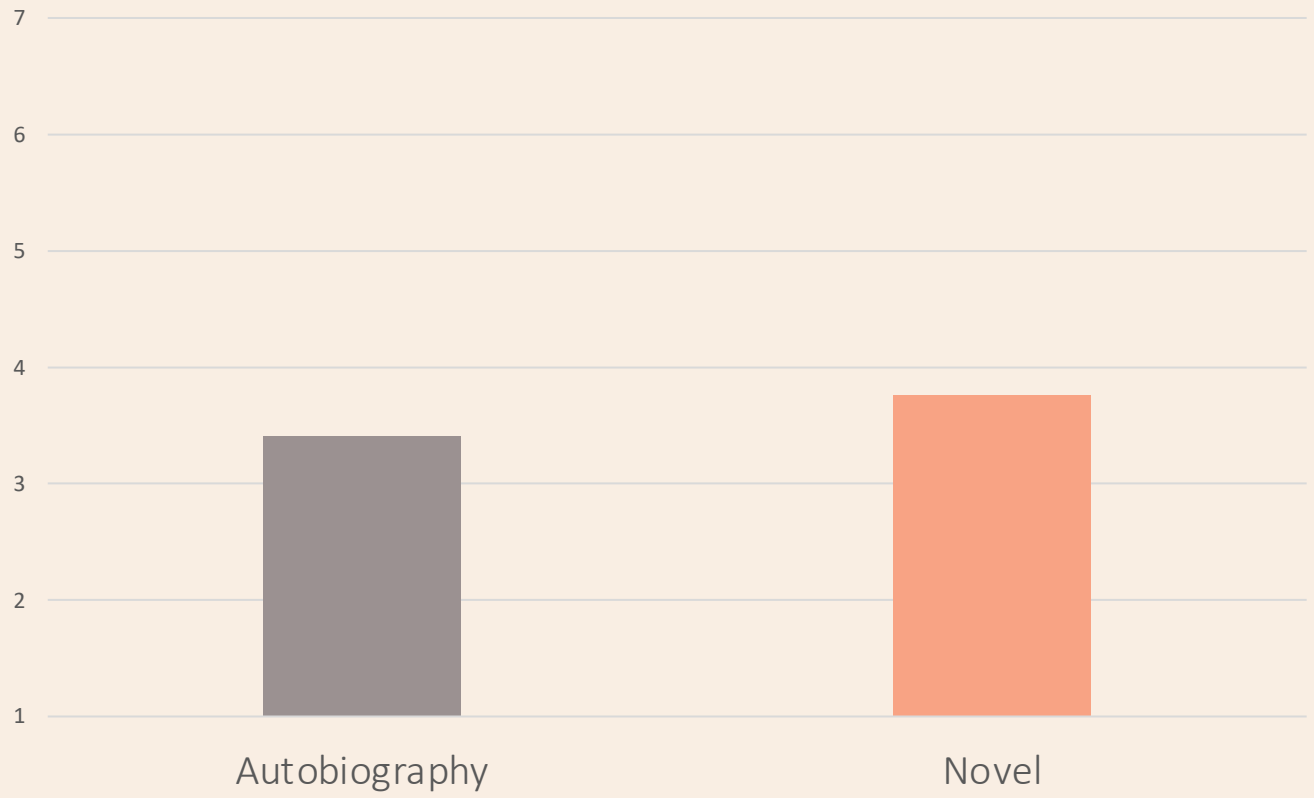
Moral disengagement

Autobiography: M = 3.41, SD = 0.96
Novel: M = 3.76, SD = 0.86

Condition
Autobiography vs. Novel

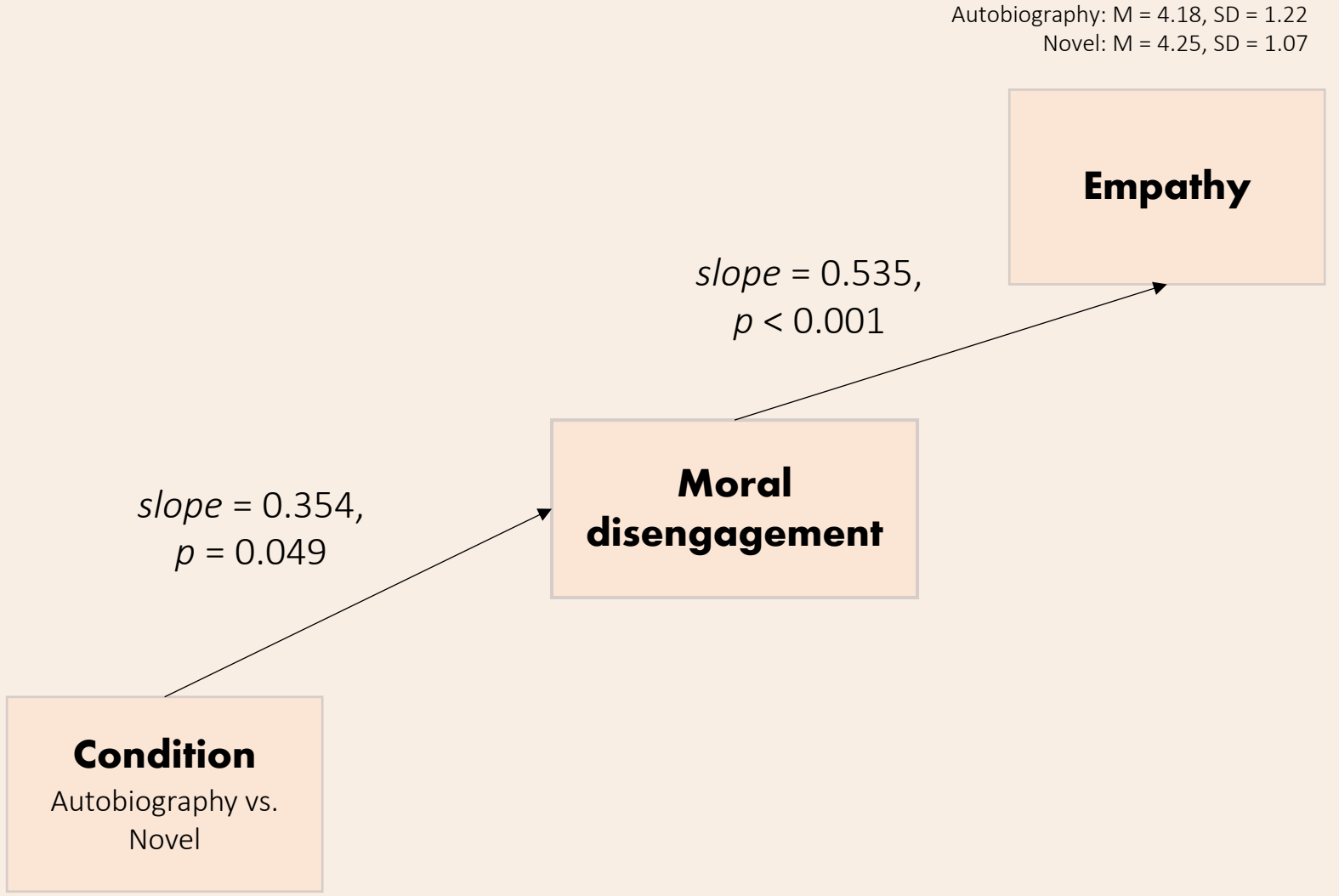
$t(102) = 1.990$, $p = 0.049$

Moral disengagement



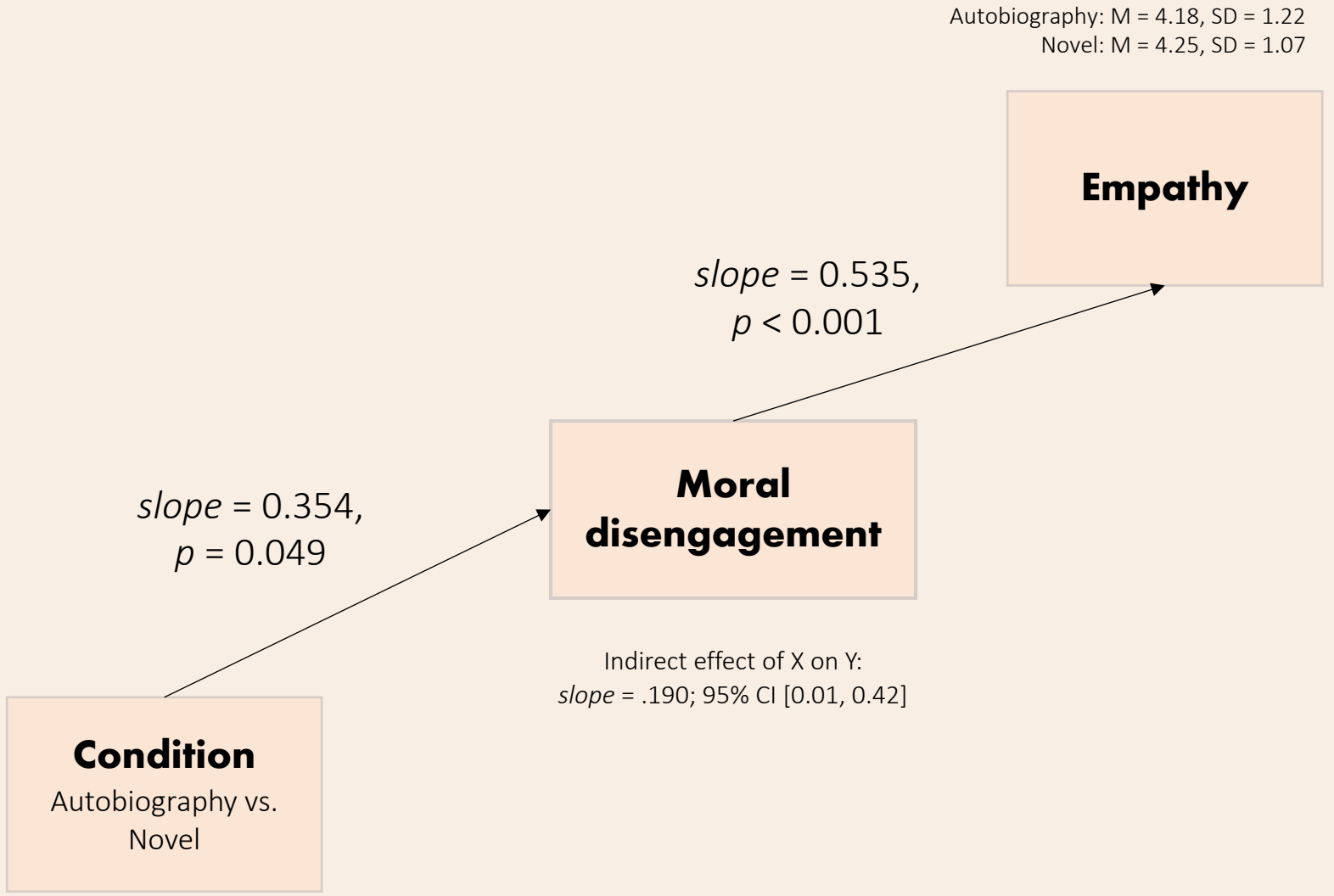
De Jonge et al., 2022

Moral disengagement



De Jonge et al., 2022

Moral disengagement



De Jonge et al., 2022

Moral judgement

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral

→

Aesthetic Appreciation

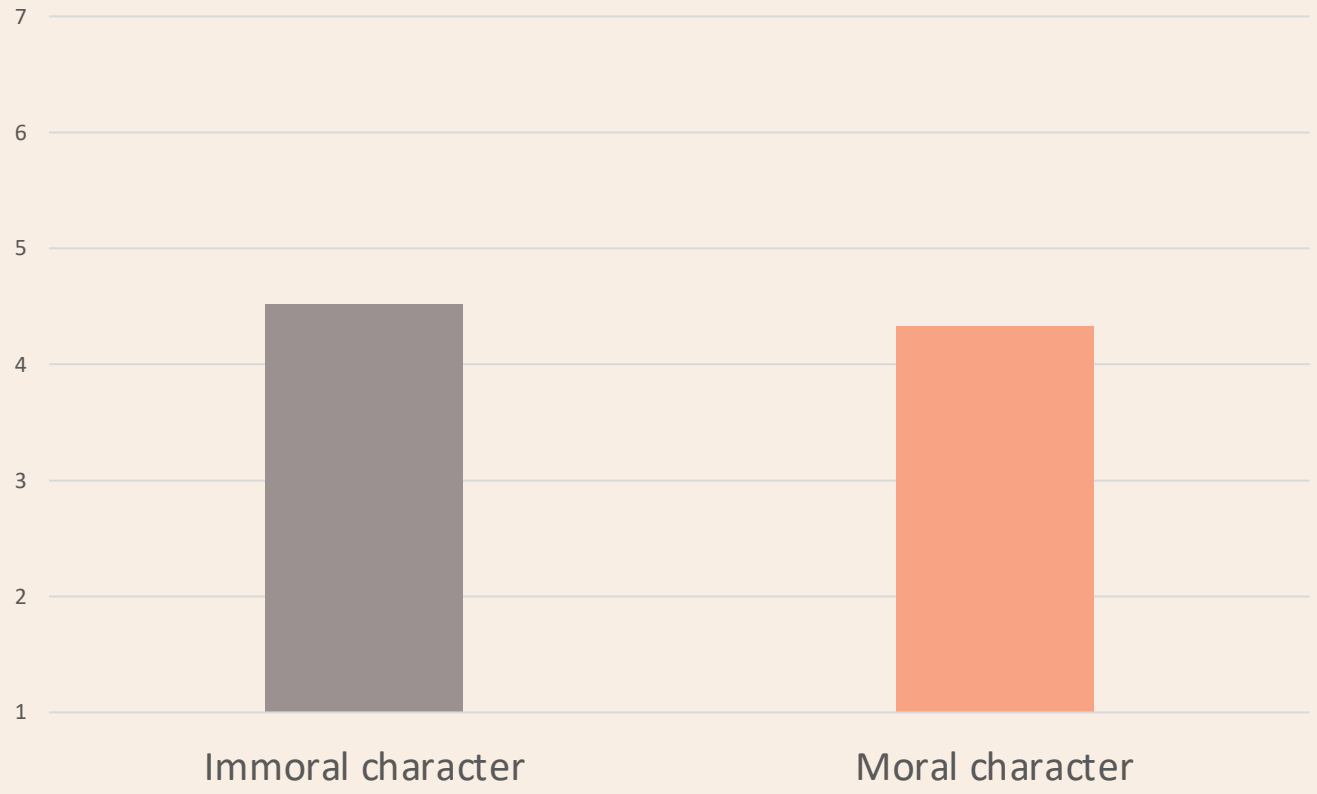
Moral judgement

Immoral: M = 4.52, SD = 0.93
Moral: M = 4.33, SD = 1.05

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral

$t(130) = -1.054$, $p = 0.294$

Aesthetic Appreciation



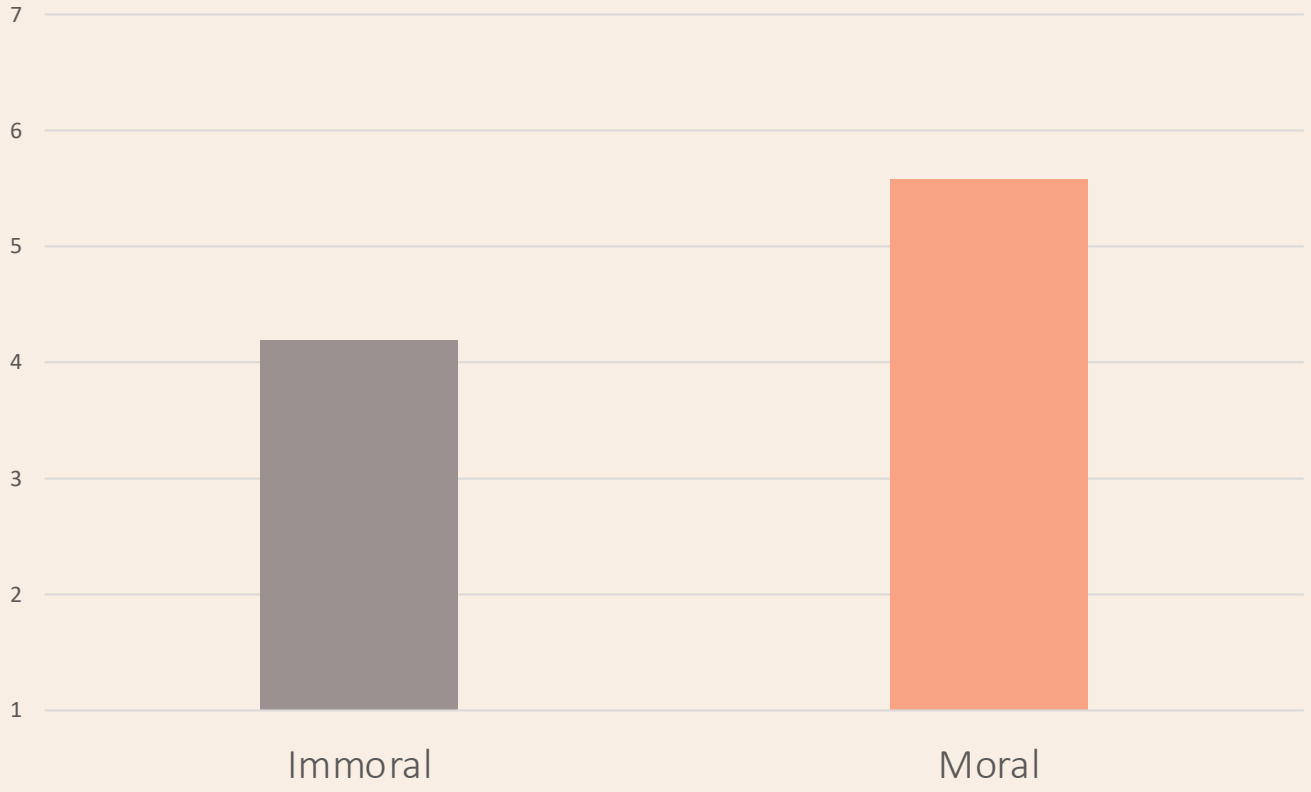
Moral judgement

Immoral: M = 5.58, SD = 1.26
Moral: M = 4.19, SD = 1.43

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral

$t(1, 130) = 5.923, p < .001$

Moral judgement



Moral judgement

Immoral: M = 4.52, SD = 0.93
Moral: M = 4.33, SD = 1.05

Aesthetic Appreciation

slope = 0.216,
p = 0.001

Moral judgement

slope = 1.389
p < 0.001

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral

Moral judgement

Immoral: M = 4.52, SD = 0.93
Moral: M = 4.33, SD = 1.05

Aesthetic Appreciation

slope = 0.216,
p = 0.001

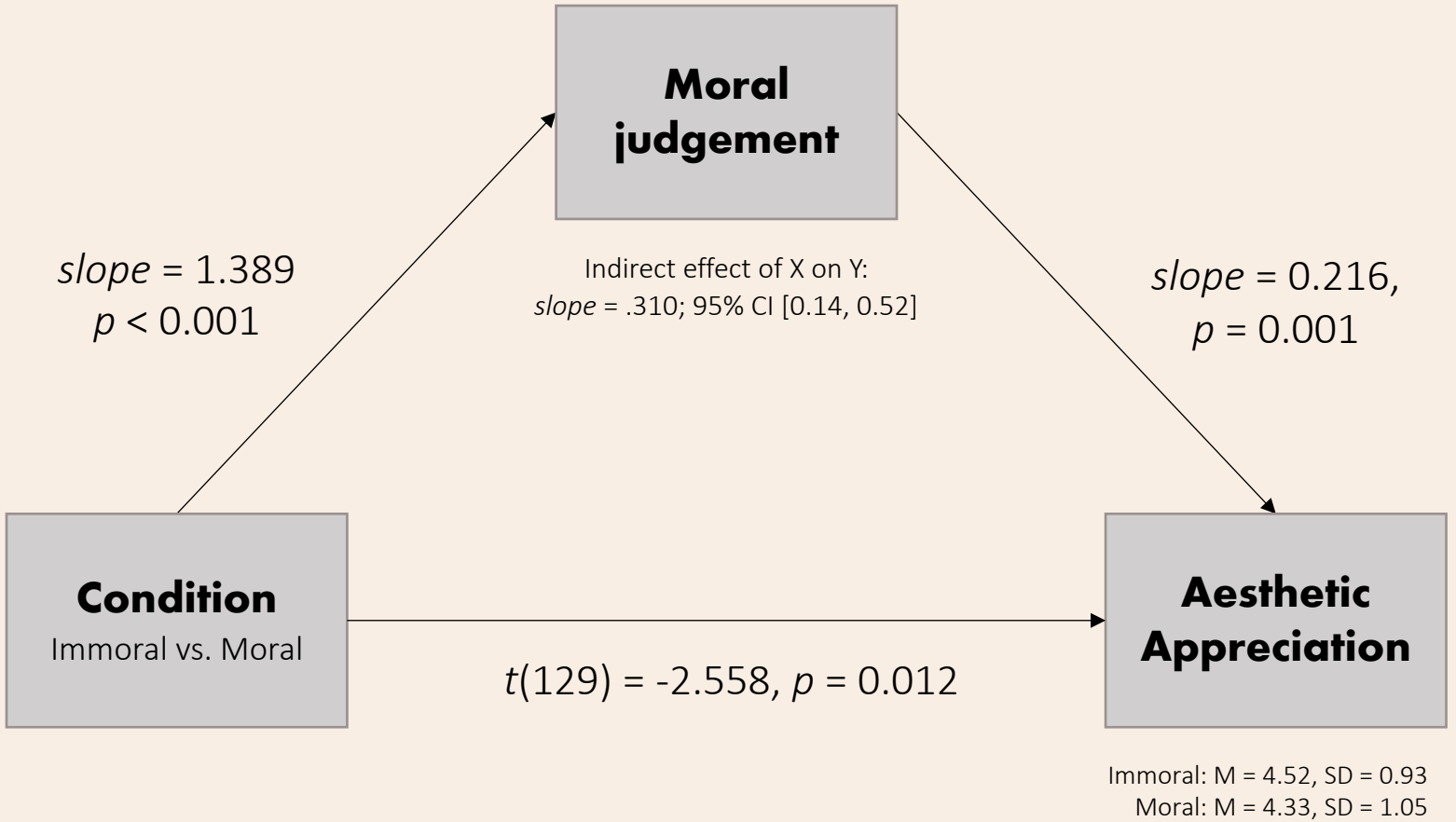
Moral judgement

slope = 1.389
p < 0.001

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral

Indirect effect of X on Y:
slope = .310; 95% CI [0.14, 0.52]

Moral judgement



Moral shift

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Moral disengagement

Readers need to morally disengage before they empathise

Readers of fiction disengage more easily from immoral conduct

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Moral judgement

Appreciation will be in line with ones perceived moral judgement

Readers can only aesthetically appreciate the immoral character if they adjust their moral judgement

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Contact me:

j.de.jonge2@vu.nl

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References

Moral disengagement

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