

The Highest Form of Intelligence

Sarcasm Increases Creativity

For Both Expressers and Recipients

Li Huang

INSEAD

Francesca Gino

Harvard University

Adam D. Galinsky

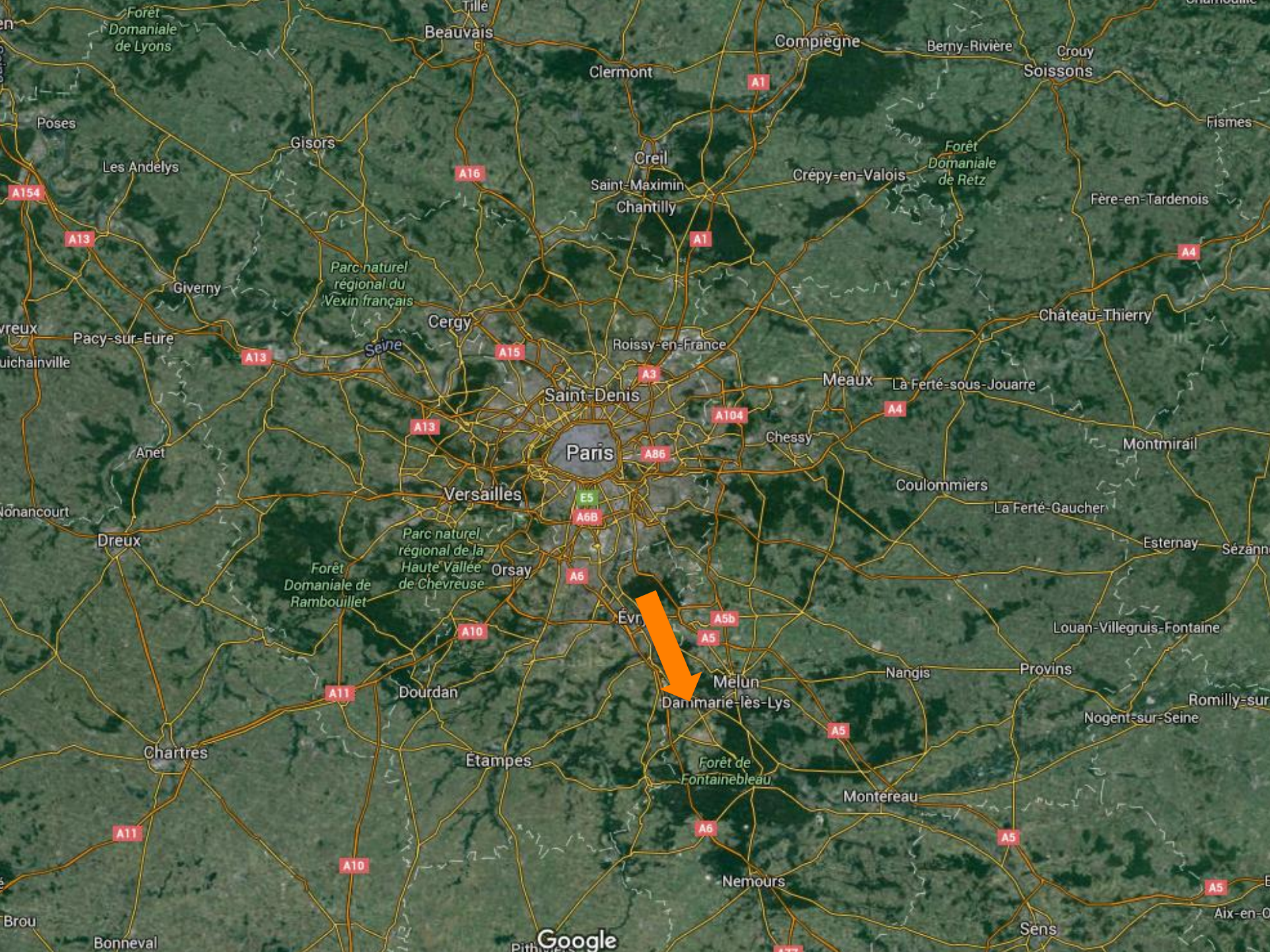
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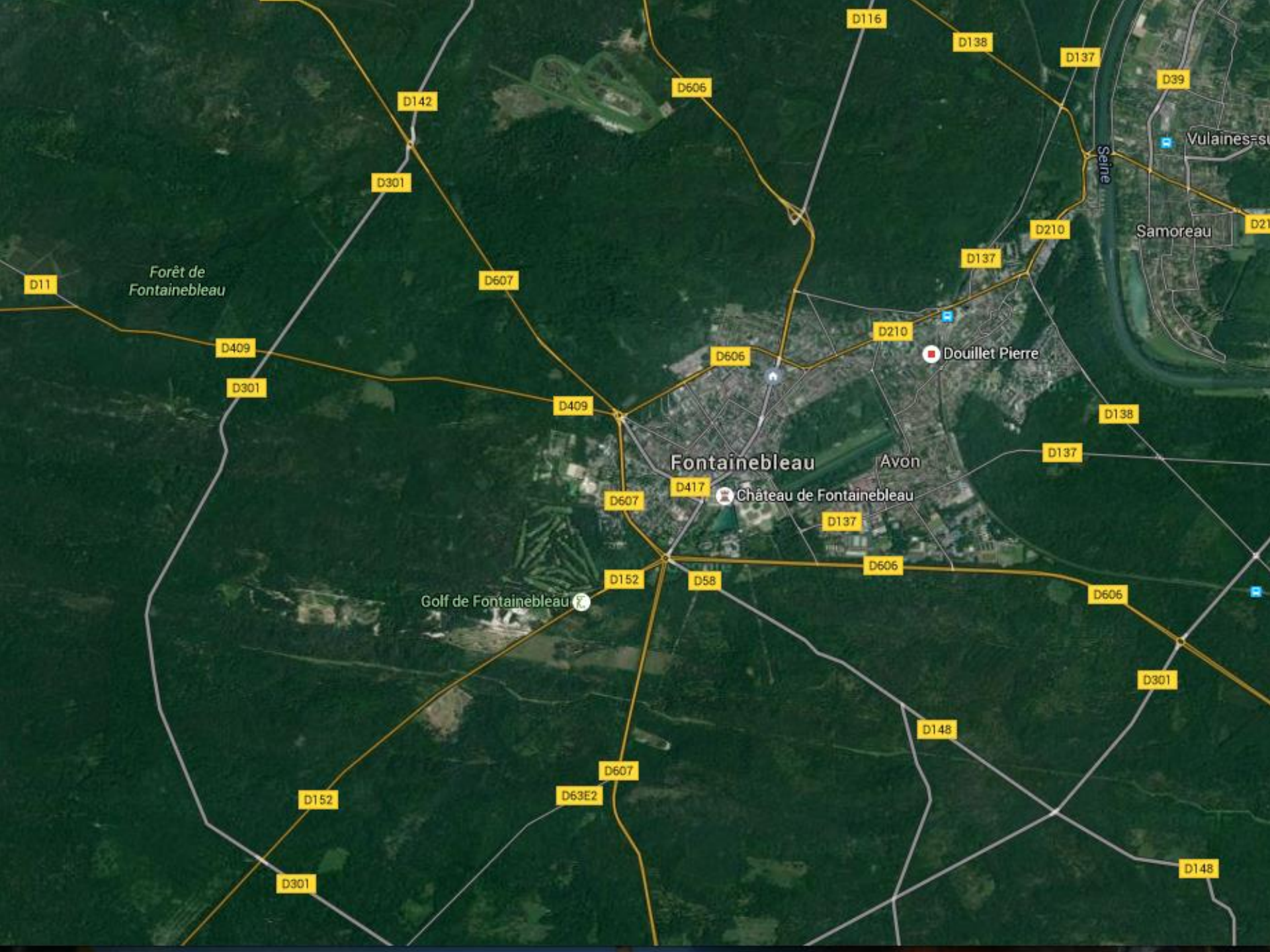


Francesca Gino
Harvard University



Adam D. Galinsky
Columbia University







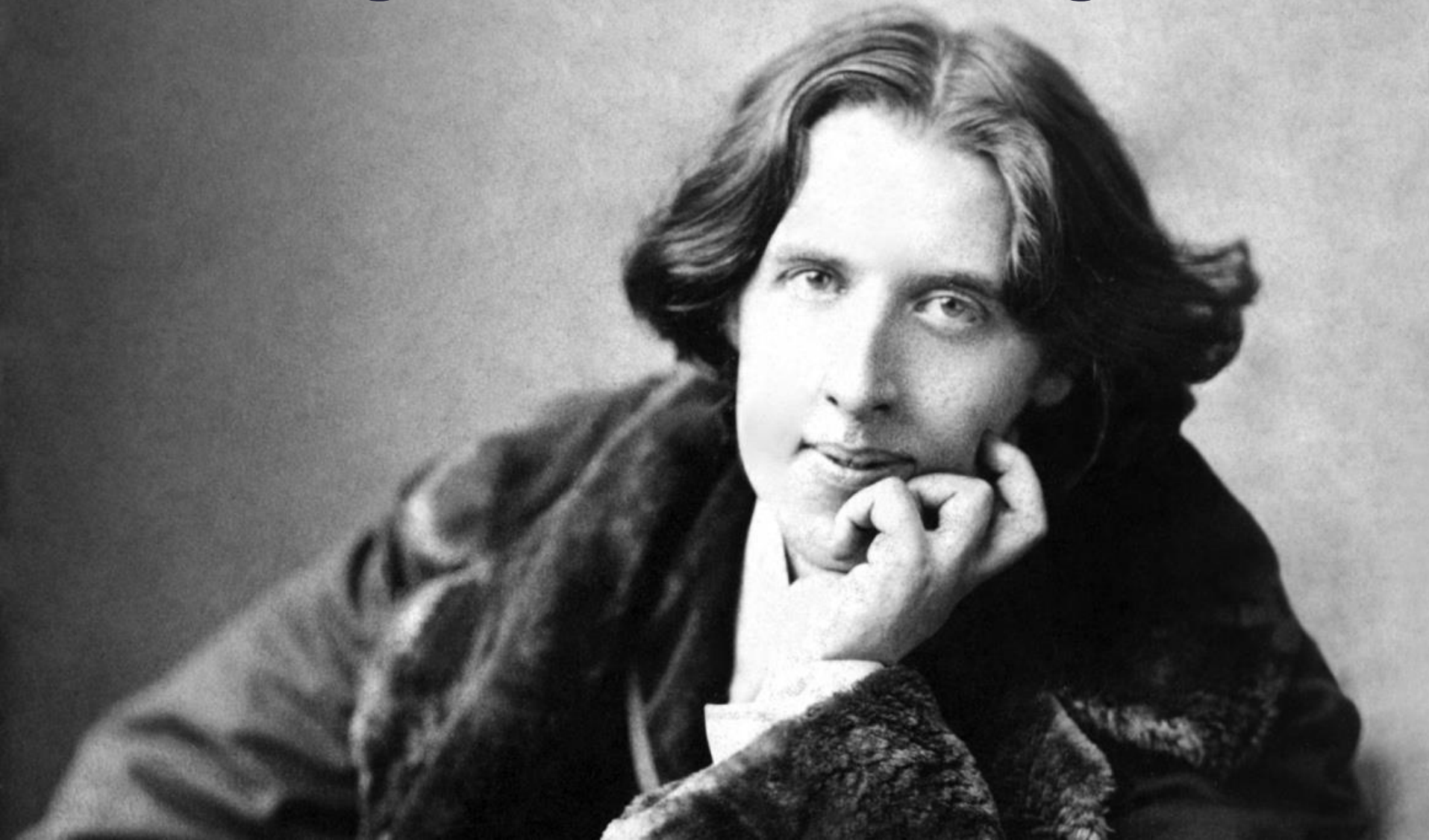
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**Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit but
the highest form of intelligence**





Instigator of Conflict

- ***Sarcasm* is a form of irony. It is humorous verbal expression intended to communicate one's meaning by using language that signifies the opposite.**

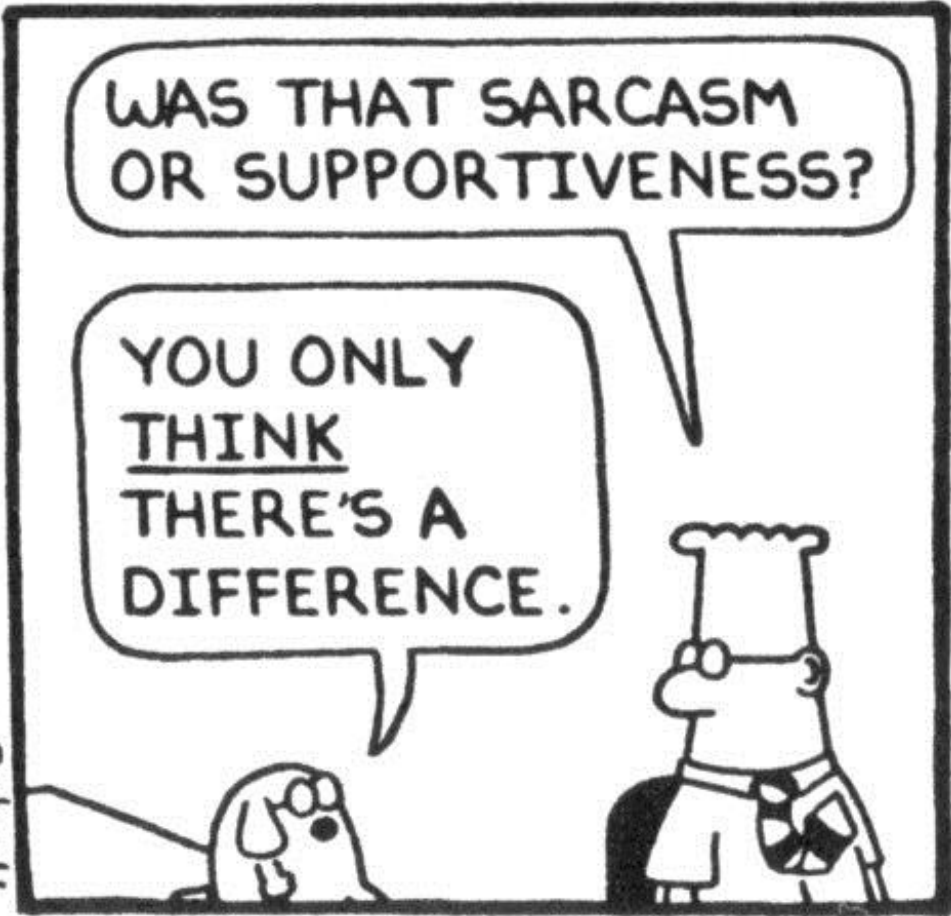
(e.g., McDonald, 1999; Shamay-Tsoory, Tomer, Berger, & Aharon-Peretz, 2003)

- **Sarcasm expresses disapproval, contempt, and scorn; it alienates others and harms relationships**

(e.g., Gottman & Silver, 1999; Losada, 1999; Pesendorfer & Koeszegi, 2006;)



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Springboard to Abstraction

- Both the construction and decoding of sarcasm entail theorizing about others' mind and accessing shared knowledge (e.g., Channon, Pellijeff, & Rule, 2005; Kruger, Epley, Parker, & Ng, 2005; McDonald, 2000; Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2003)
- **To construct or interpret sarcasm is to traverse the psychological distance between the stated meaning and the intended meaning, which requires abstract thinking**

Abstraction

- **Construal level theory (CLT):** The same event can be represented at multiple levels (Trope & Liberman, 2010)
- **Abstract, high-level construals:** Superordinate, general features of events or the ultimate goals of behaviors
- **Concrete, low-level construals:** Incidental and contextual features of events or the specific means

Jim, Don't work too hard!

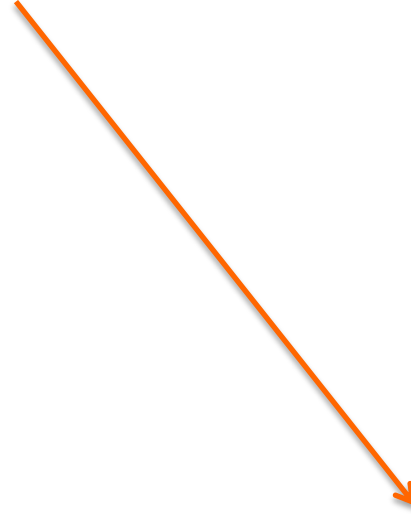


“You should conduct yourself appropriately (across contexts)”

Abstract



Concrete



“Don’t work too hard”

“You are not working hard enough”

Stated (Sarcastic) Meaning



Psychological Distance



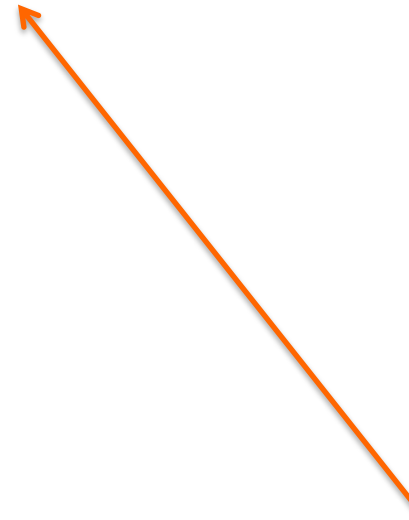
Intended Meaning

“You should conduct yourself appropriately (across contexts)”

Abstract



Concrete



“Don't work too hard”

“You are not working hard enough”

Stated (Sarcastic) Meaning



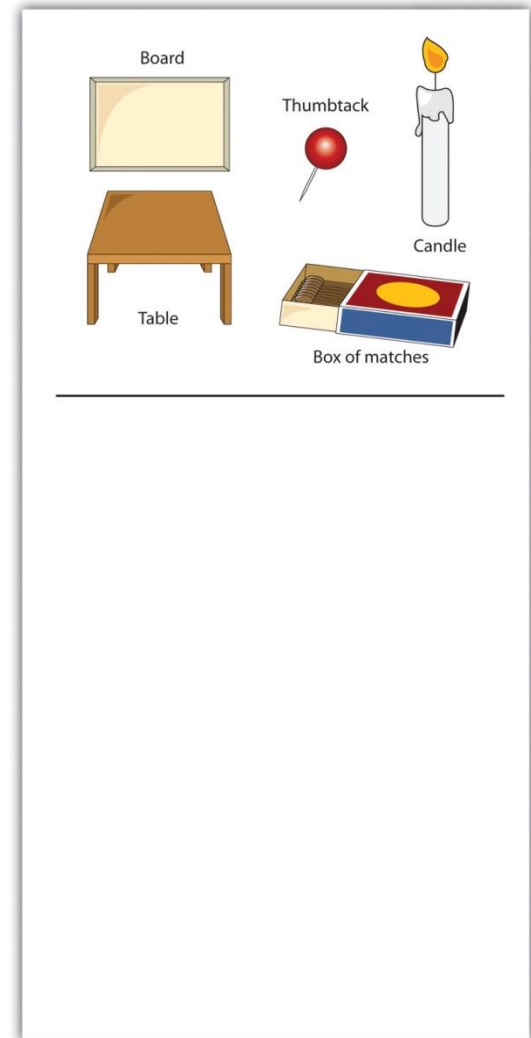
Psychological Distance



Intended Meaning

Creativity

- The generation of ideas, insights, or problem solutions that are novel and meant to be useful (Amabile, 1983; Sternberg & O'Hara, 1999)
- **Abstract Construal: A precursor to creativity**
 - Restructures and clarifies goals (Ward, 1995)
 - Promotes diverse solutions (Marsh, Ward, Landau, 1999)
 - Reduces functional fixedness (Ward, Patterson & Sifonis, 2004)



Hypothesis 1: Expressing or receiving sarcastic remarks, as compared to sincere or neutral remarks, increases *a sense of conflict*.

Hypothesis 2: Expressing or receiving sarcastic remarks, as compared to sincere or neutral remarks, increases *creativity*.

Hypothesis 3: Expressing or receiving sarcastic remarks, as compared to sincere or neutral remarks, increases *abstract thinking*.

Hypothesis 4: The positive effect of sarcasm on creativity is mediated through increased abstract thinking.

Study 1: Expressing or Receiving Sarcasm in Simulated Conversations

- **Goal:** To examine the effect of making or receiving sarcastic remarks on conflict and creativity
- **Manipulation:** Simulated Conversation Task (neutral, expressing sincerity, receiving sincerity, expressing sarcasm, or receiving sarcasm)
 - A modified version of the Picture-Frustration Study (P-FS, Nevo & Nevo, 1983; Rosenzweig, Clark, & Helen, 1946)

Manipulations: Typical Responses

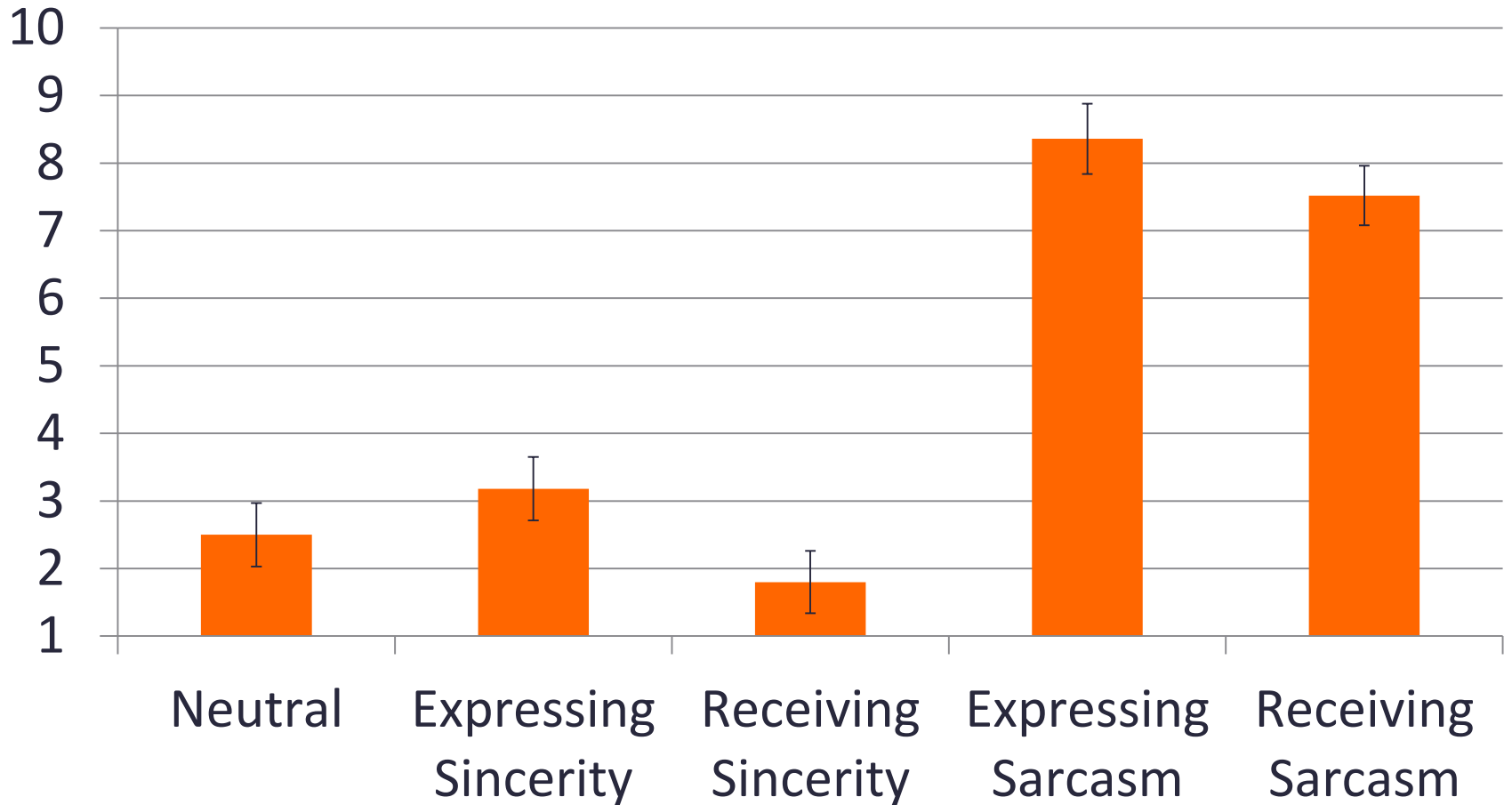


- **Neutral:**
It's ok, accidents happen
- **Expressing sincerity:**
"No problem. Don't worry about it." OR
"You could have at least slowed down a bit"
- **Receiving sincerity:**
"Yeah, it happens" OR "Grrr. Now I have to go home and change."
- **Expressing sarcasm:**
"I'm sure you must have. The puddle was so large that an elephant could drown in it."
- **Receiving sarcasm:**
"Sure you did!"

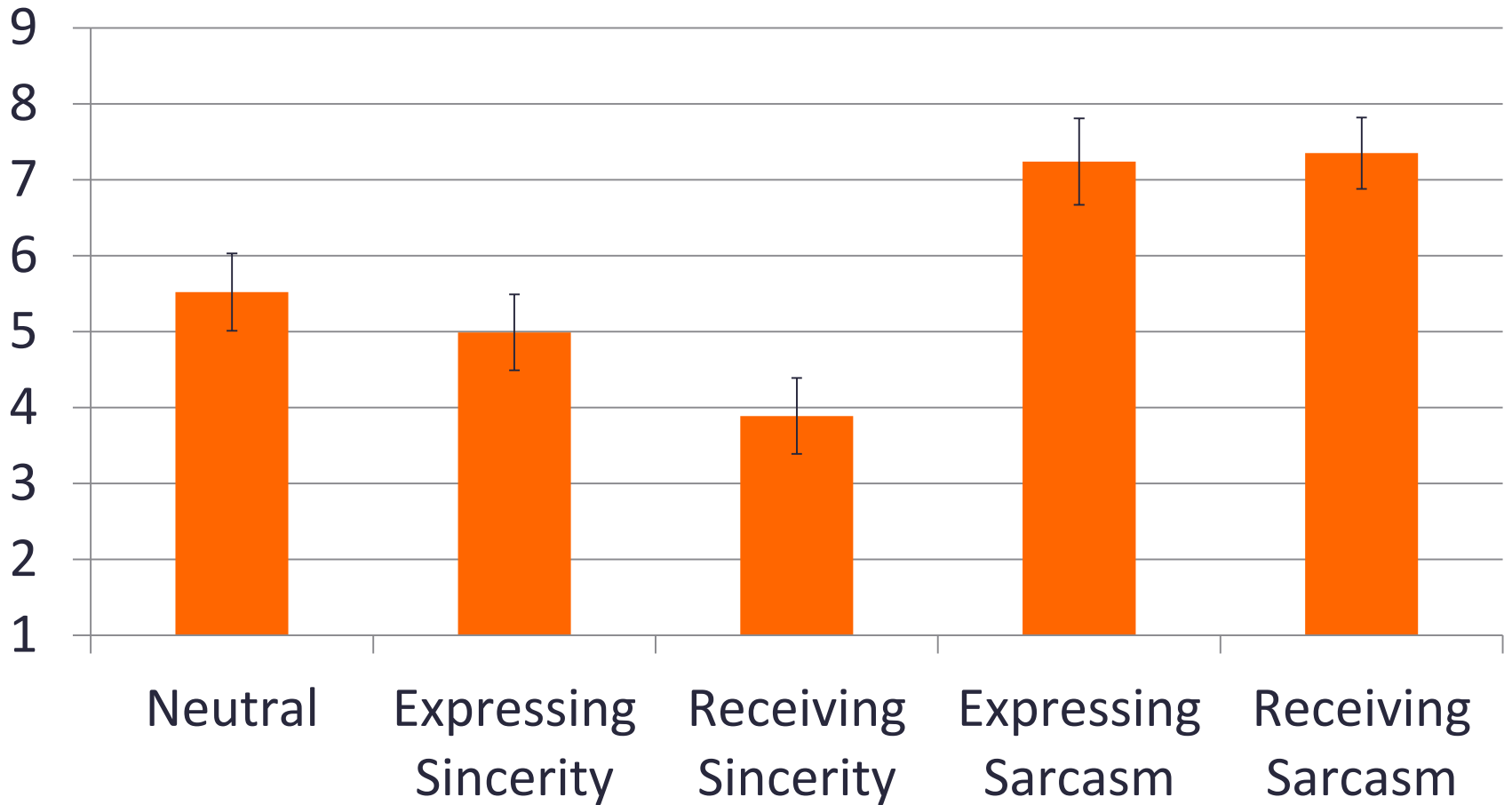
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 - A modified version of the Picture-Frustration Study (P-FS, Nevo & Nevo, 1983; Rosenzweig, Clark, & Helen, 1946)
- **Dependent Measures:**
 - **Creativity:** Remote Association Test (RAT, Mednick, 1968; e.g., Manner, Round, Tennis = Table)
 - **Conflict:** A seven-item measure ($\alpha = .94$) (Jehn, 1995; e.g., There were feelings of hostility among parties. 1 = strongly disagree, 11 = strongly agree)
 - **Manipulation Check:** A two-item scale ($\alpha = .82$) (e.g., How much did you/the other party express sarcasm/irony? 1=not at all, 11=very much)

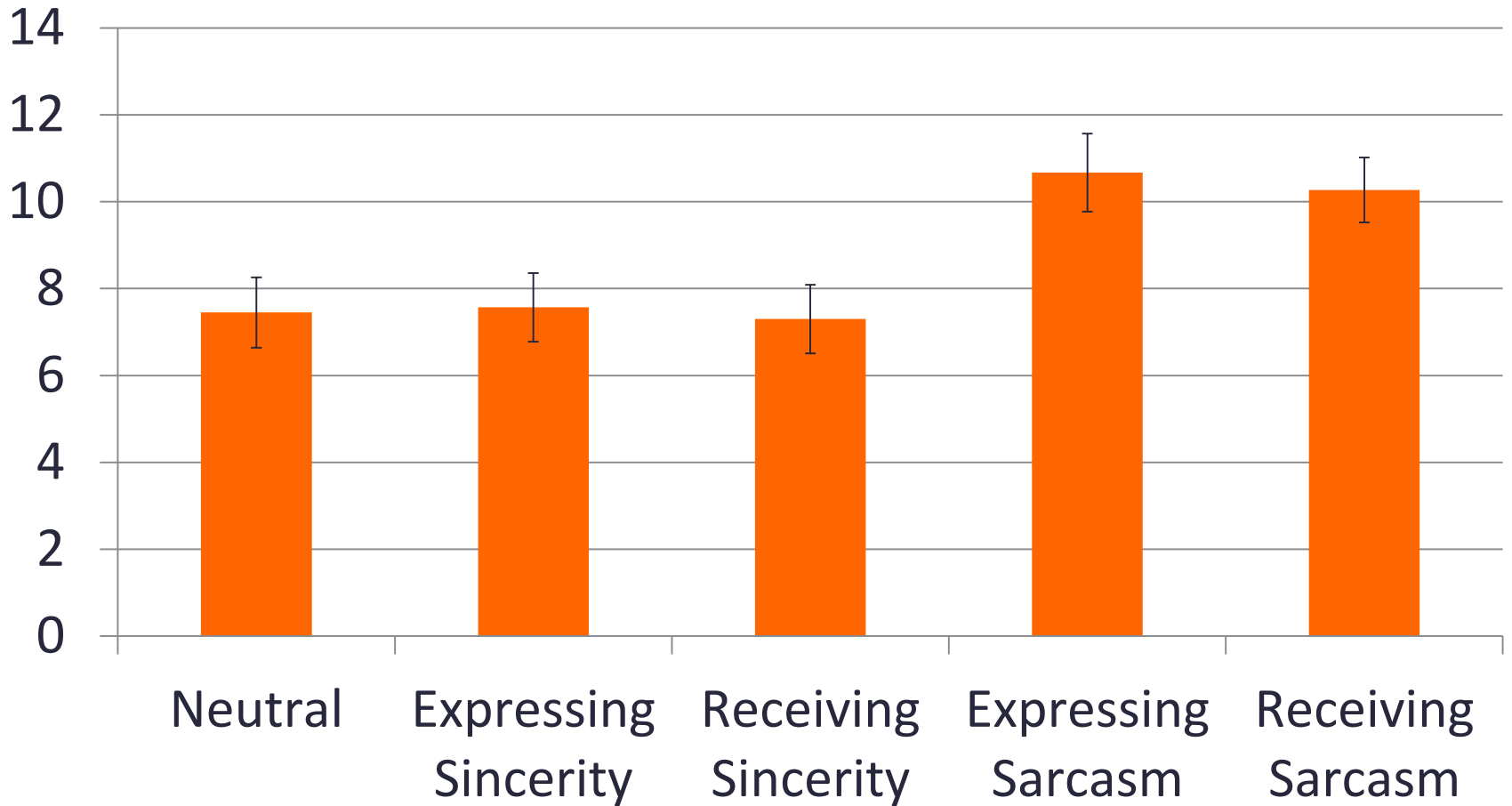
Manipulation Check



Conflict



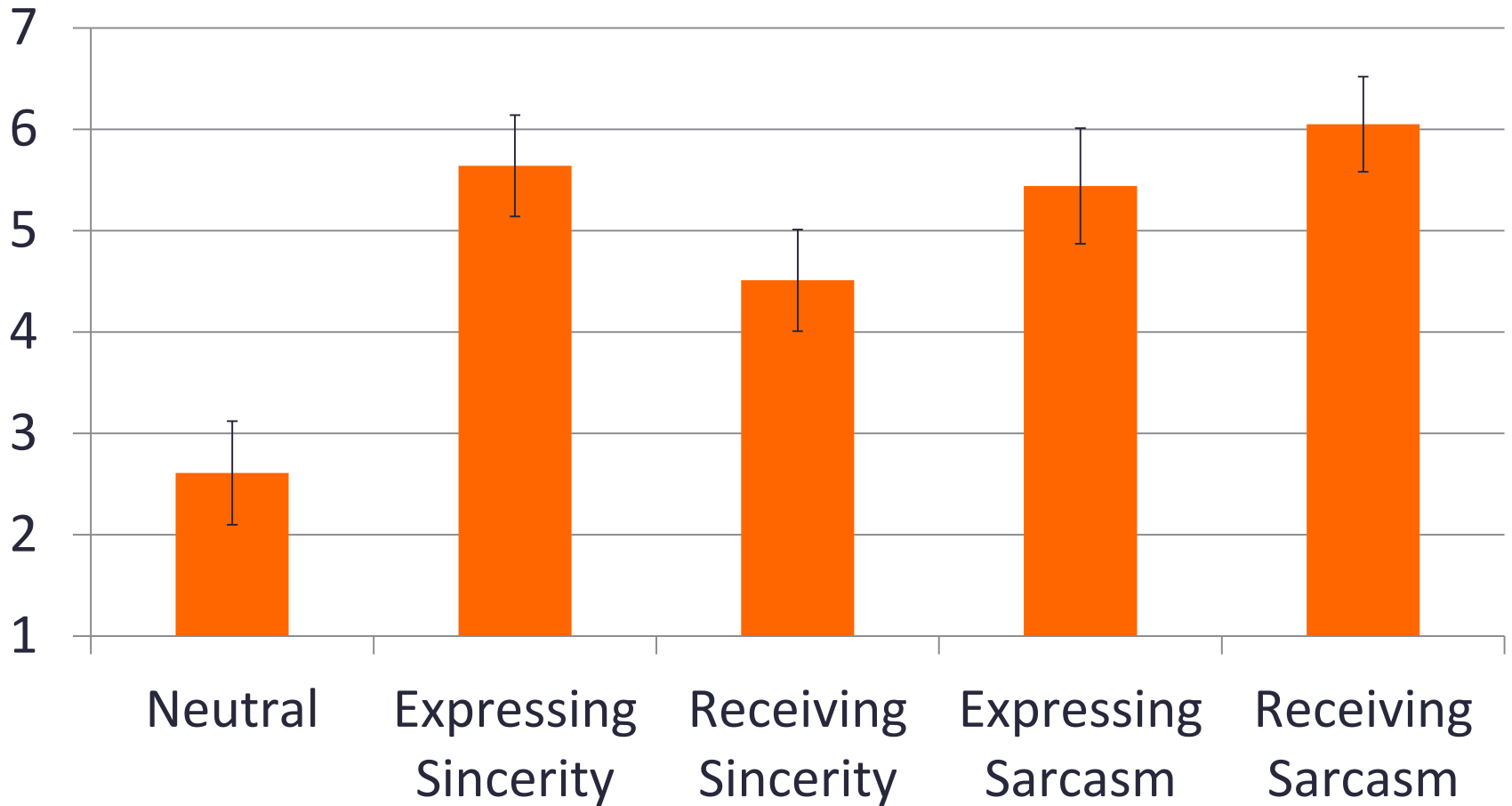
Creativity



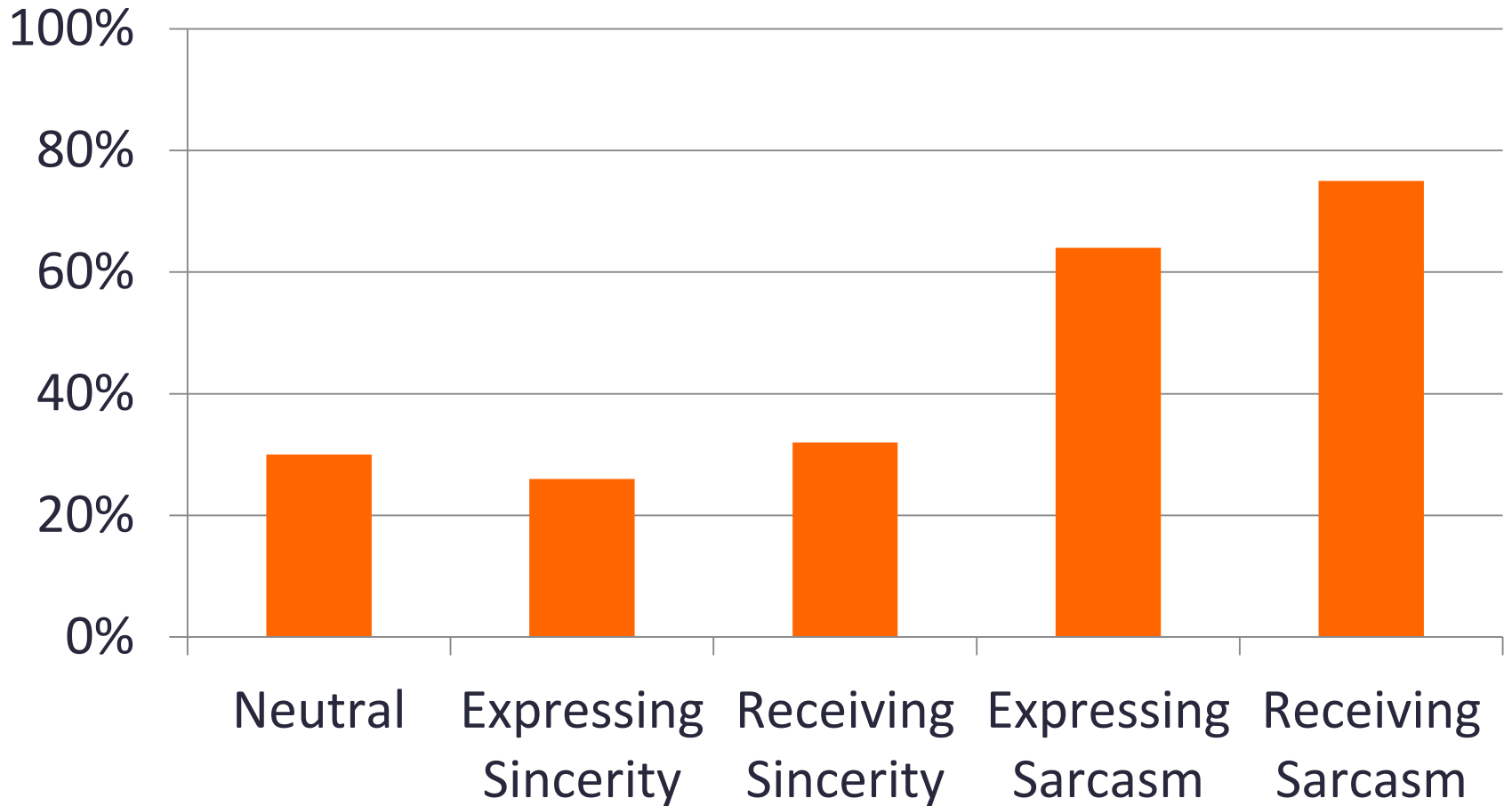
Study 2: Recalling Expressing or Receiving Sarcasm

- **Goal:** To replicate Study 1 using a different manipulation of sarcasm
- **Manipulation:** Recall (neutral event, expressing sincerity, receiving sincerity, expressing sarcasm, or receiving sarcasm)
 - Sincerity: “speaking and acting truthfully about one’s feelings and thoughts”
 - Sarcasm: “expressing the opposite of what one thinks or feels with the intention of communicating one’s true meaning”
- **Dependent Measures:**
 - Creativity: Duncker Candle Problem (Duncker, 1945)
 - Conflict: Same as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .94$)

Conflict



Creativity



Study 3: Abstraction as the Mediator

- **Goal:** To examine abstraction as the mechanism between sarcasm and creativity
- **Manipulation:** Same as in Study 2
- **Dependent Measures:**
 - Abstract Construal: Behavior Identification Form (BIF, Vallacher & Wegner, 1989)

Behavior Identification Form

e.g., Voting

a. Marking a ballot

b. Influencing the election

e.g., Locking a door

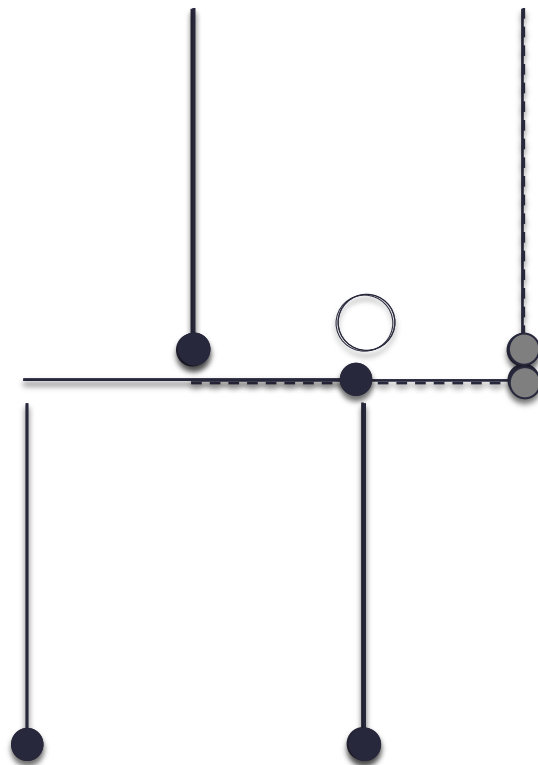
a. Putting a key in the lock

b. Securing the house

Study 3: Abstraction as the Mediator

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 - Abstract Construal: Behavior Identification Form (BIF, Vallacher & Wegner, 1989)
 - Creativity: Olive in A Glass problem

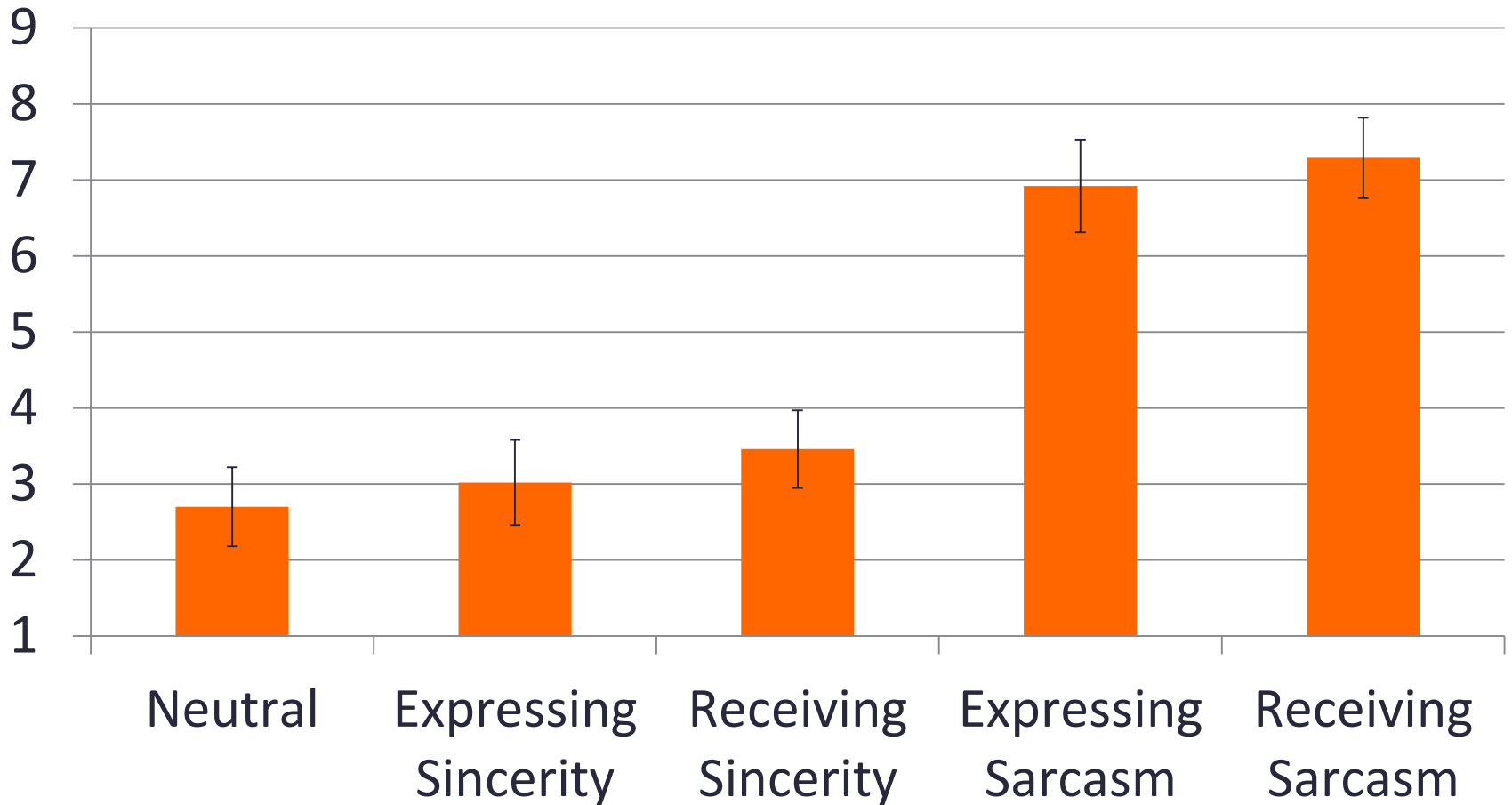
Olive in A Glass



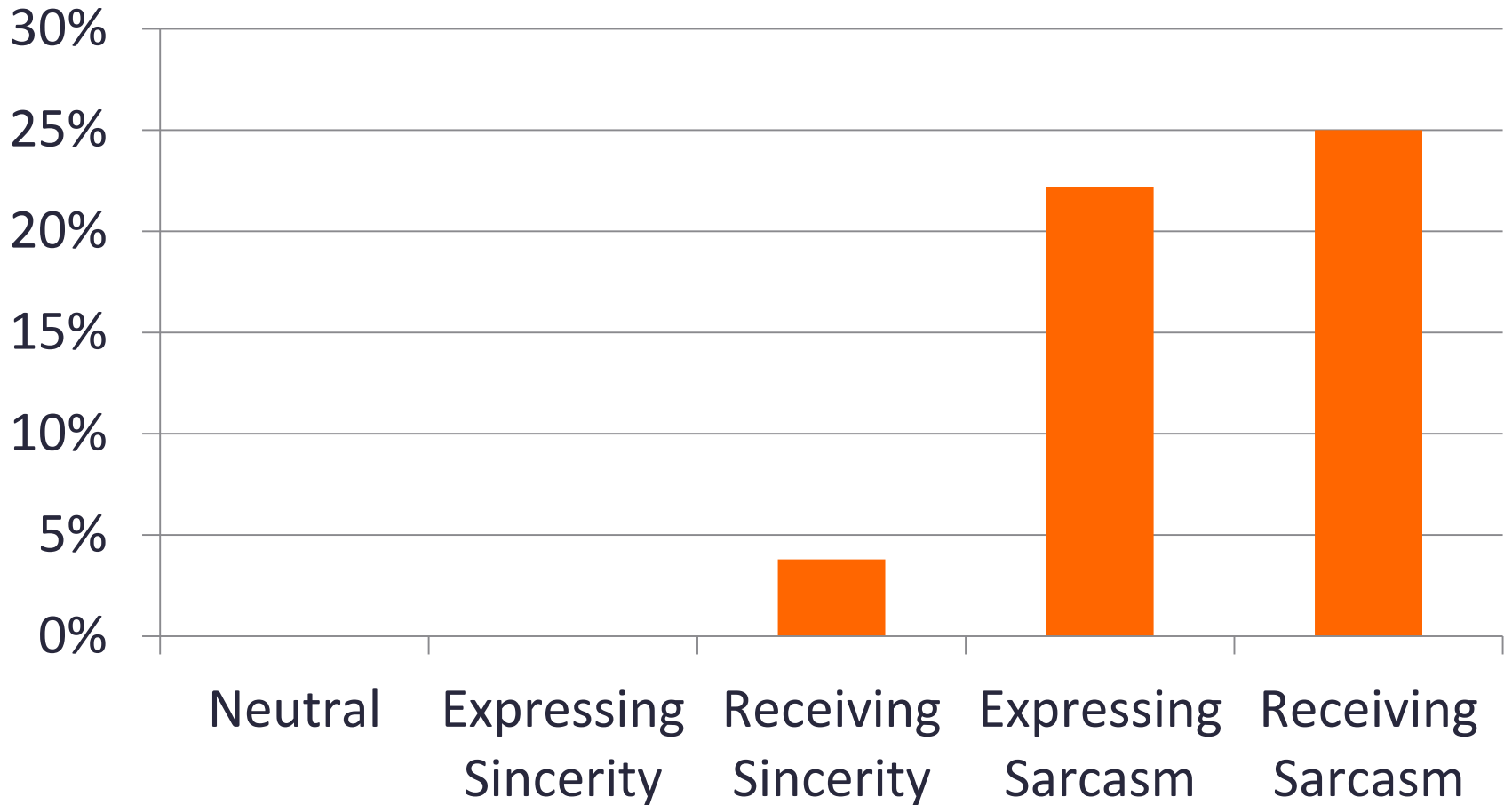
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- **Manipulation:** Same as in Study 2
- **Dependent Measures:**
 - Abstract Construal: Behavior Identification Form (BIF, Vallacher & Wegner, 1989)
 - Creativity: Olive in A Glass problem
 - Manipulation Check: Same as in study 1 ($\alpha=.87$)

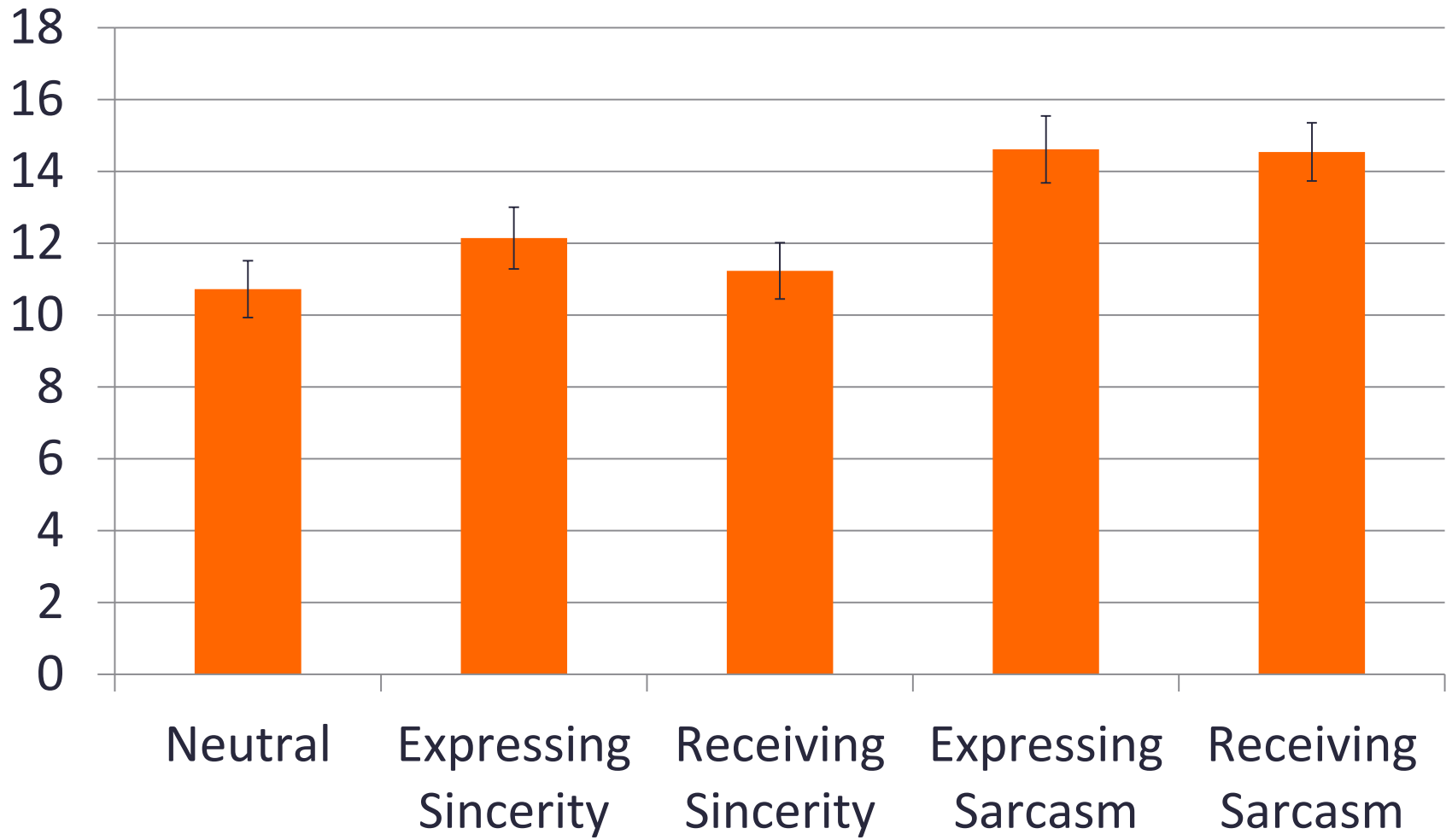
Manipulation Check



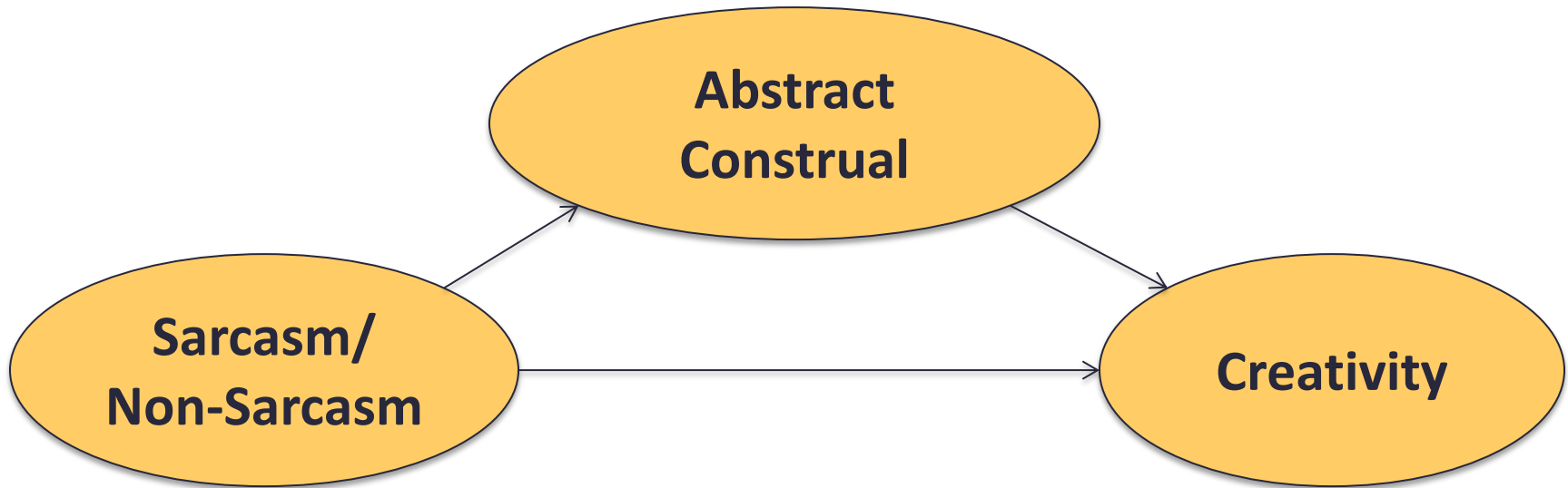
Creativity



Abstract Construal



Mediation



Bootstrapping 95% CI = .08, 1.61
(Preacher & Hayes, 2008)



**Yeah. Too bad
our souls don't**

**Isn't it great that
our bodies fit
together perfectly?**



**How could you have
said that?**

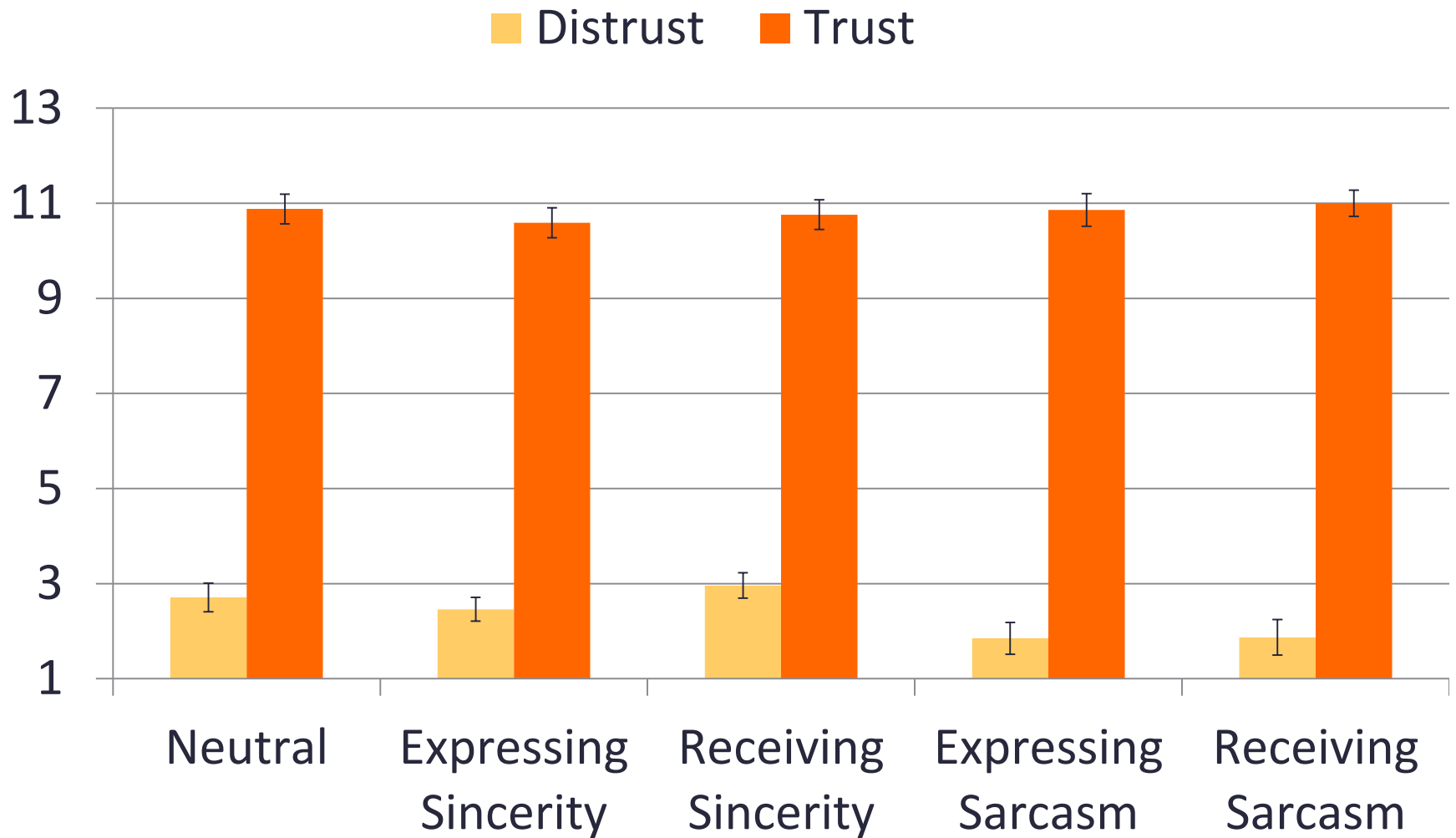
Satirizing with Trusted Others

- Interpersonal Trust: Willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of another's intentions or behavior (e.g., Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998)
 - A lower sense of conflict (Arrow, 1974; Lindskold, 1978)
 - More pronounced effect when intentions are ambiguous (McEvily, Perrone, & Zaheer, 2003)
- Recipients interpret sarcasm from individuals they trust positively
- Expressers expect individuals they trust to interpret their sarcasm positively

Study 4: Sarcasm with Trust

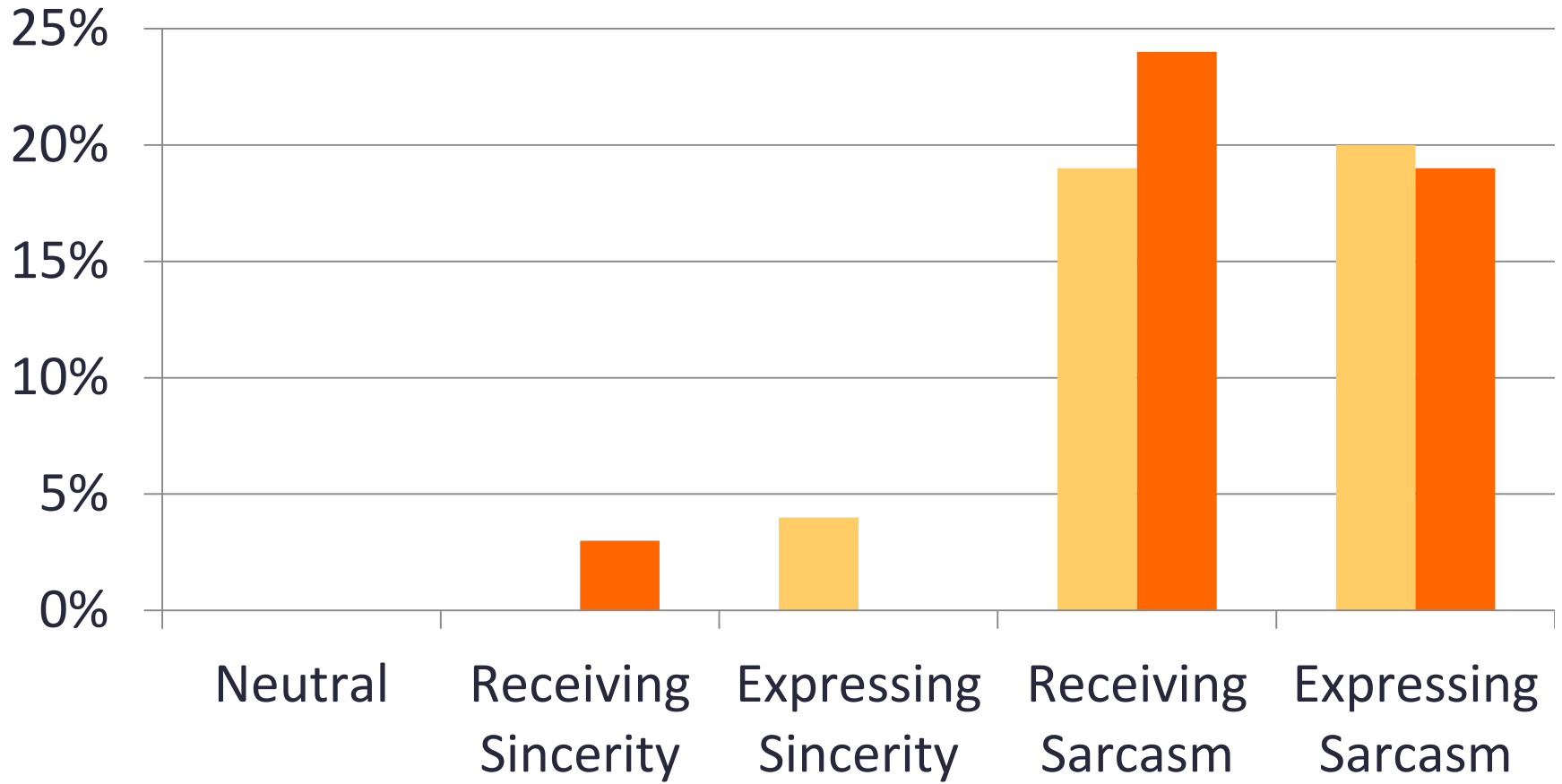
- **Goal:** To identify trust development as a strategy that helps take advantage of the cognitive benefits of sarcasm without incurring its relational cost
- **Trust Manipulation:** Recall (distrust vs. trust)
 - Write down the initials of the person you distrust or trust the most, briefly describe the person's face, and explain why you distrust or trust this person
- **Sarcasm Manipulation:** Simulated Conversation Task (neutral, expressing sincerity, receiving sincerity, expressing sarcasm, or receiving sarcasm)
 - Same as in Study 1, except that the participants imagined the person shown speaking was the person they just recalled and described
- **Dependent Measures:**
 - Creativity: Olive in a Glass (same as in Study 3)
 - Conflict: Same as in Studies 1 & 2 ($\alpha = .92$)
 - Manipulation Check (How much do you trust the person you described? 1 = not at all, 11 = very much)

Trust Manipulation Check



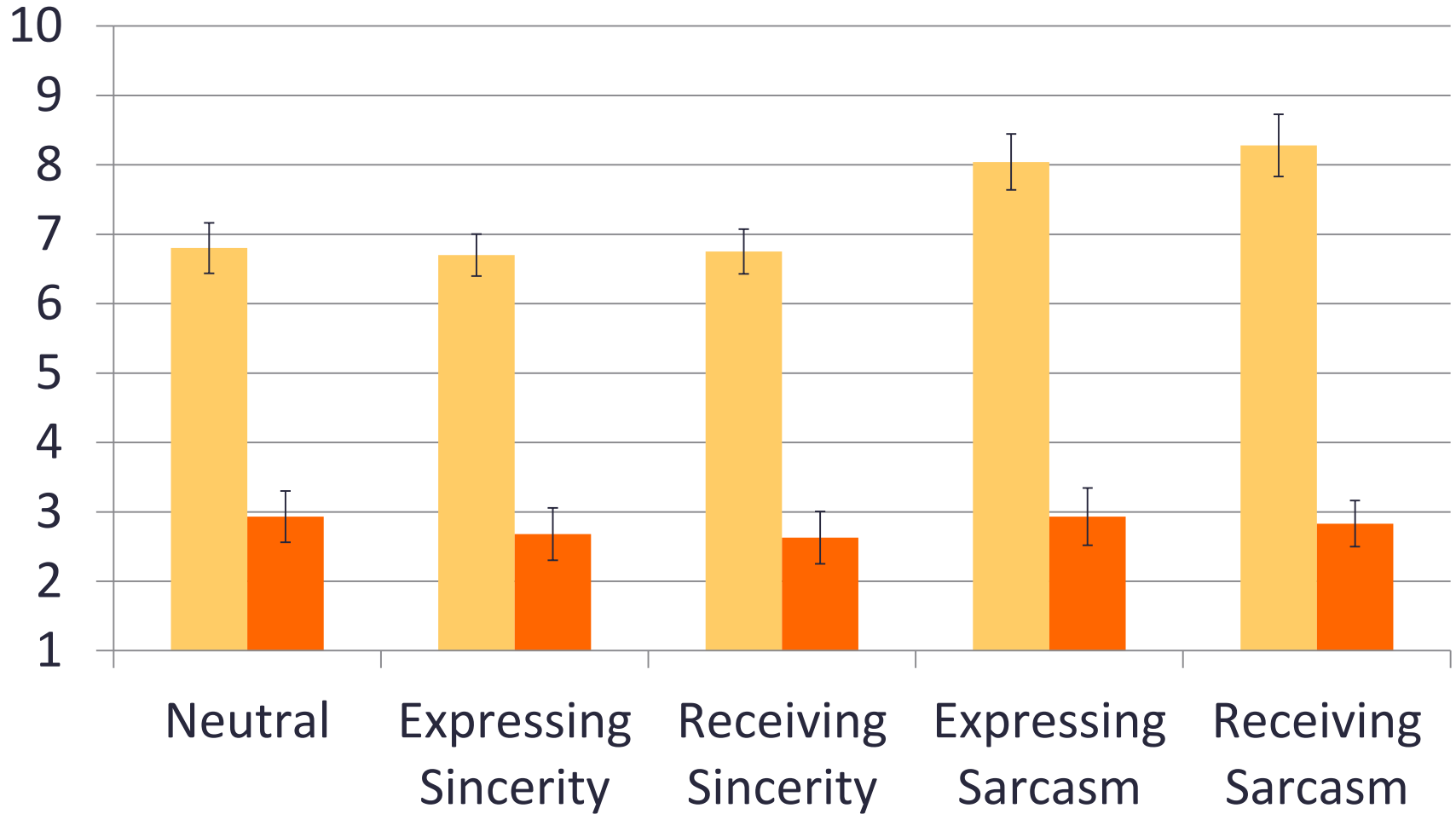
Creativity

■ Distrust ■ Trust



Conflict

■ Distrust ■ Trust





Isn't it great that
our bodies fit
together
perfectly?

Yeah. Too bad
our souls don't

This is
married
years ago
sharp-wit



Thank you! Questions?

li.huang@insead.edu

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