

The Search for Predictable Moral Partners: Predictability and Preferences in Moral Character

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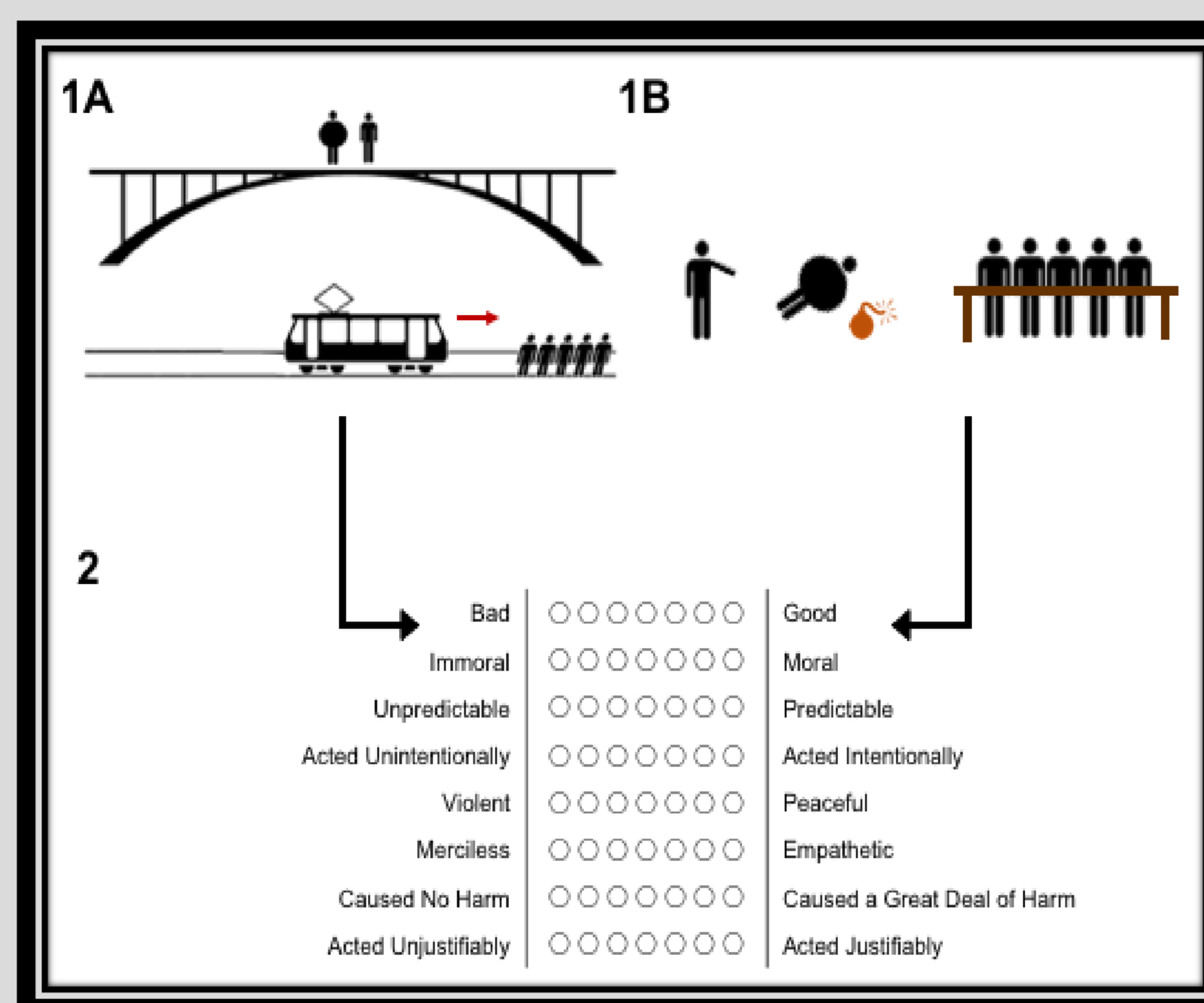
Predictability is
a factor
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others.

Four studies (N = 1,457 US residents and 81 traditional people of Papua),

Sacrificial moral dilemmas (Trolley-like problems).

Utilitarian agents, described as opting to sacrifice a single individual for the greater good, were perceived as less predictable and less moral than deontological agents whose inaction resulted in five people being harmed.

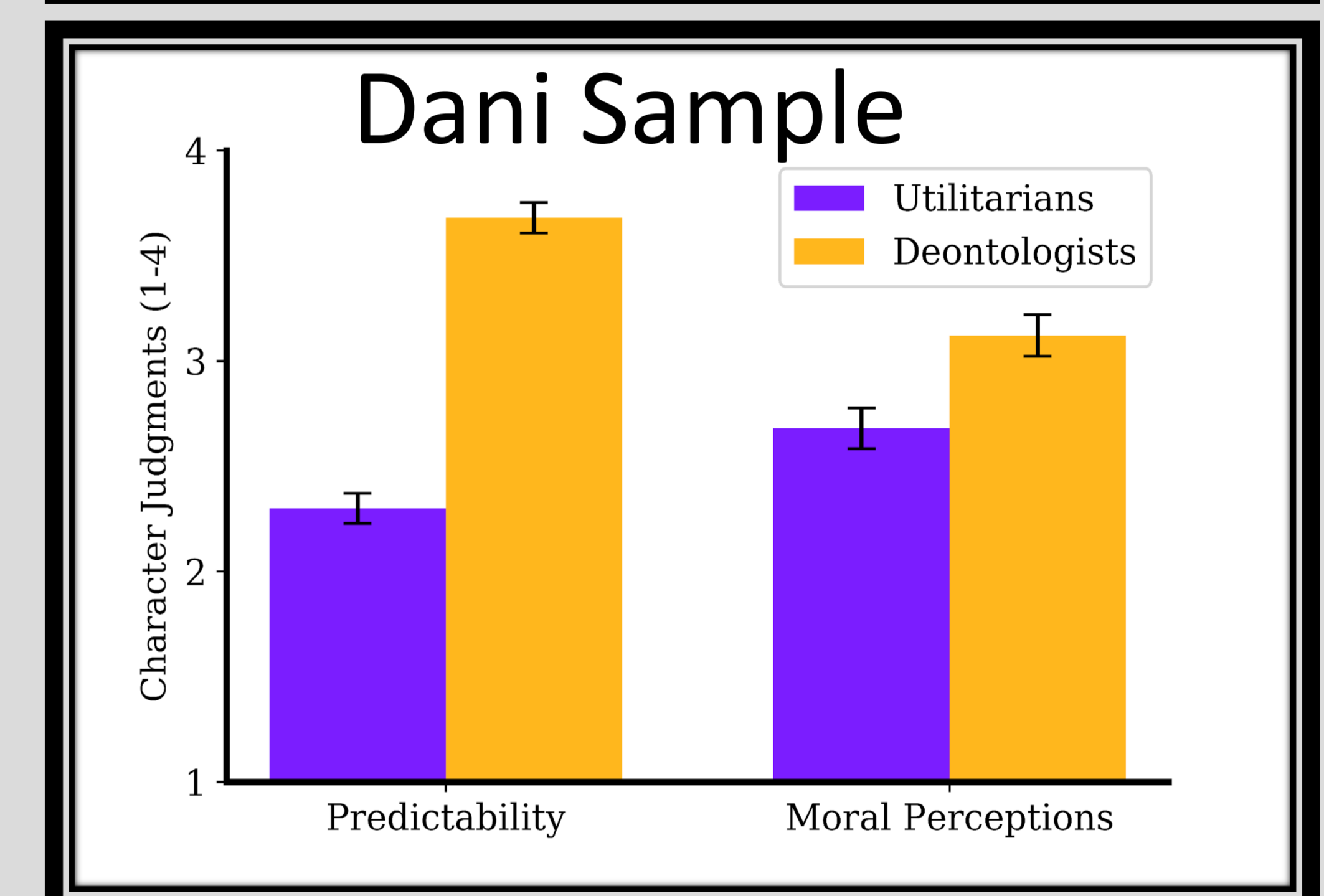
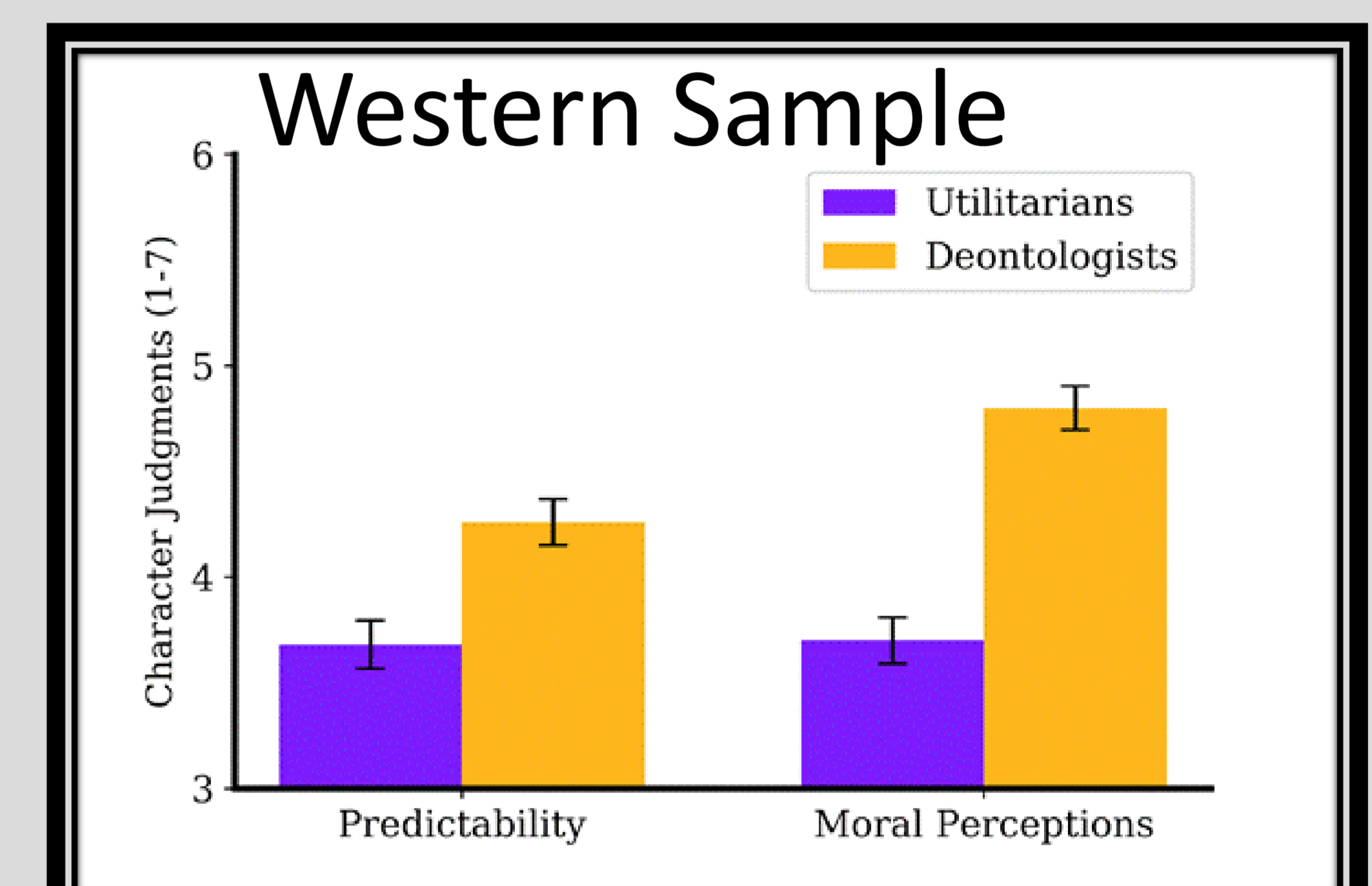
We show that these effects generalize to a non-Western sample of the Dani people, a traditional indigenous society of Papua.



Two vignettes (Trolley and Bomb) presented in a randomized order (changed to a tree falling for the Dani people instead of a trolley).

One vignette described a hypothetical actor who decided to let harm befall five people in order to avoid sacrificing a single individual (1A) and the other described a hypothetical actor choosing to perform this sacrifice (1B).

Participants' task was to evaluate each actor on eight moral dimensions presented in a randomized order within a matrix table (2).



Predictability appears to be a factor considered when judging the moral character of others.

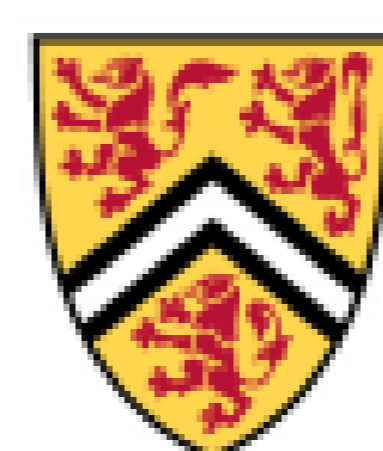
We propose that this predictability preference is an adaptation for supporting cooperation with others in line with theories of “morality-as-cooperation”.

Adding strength to evolutionary focused accounts, we observe a premium for predictability in both a Western (US residents) and indigenous non-Western society (adults from the Dani traditional society of Papua).

Pre-print available at: <https://psyarxiv.com/hwdg6/>
(subject to change following peer-review)

Zoom Invite: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/71331500228?pwd=dXY5cXkyRlNiOXFmdms3ZG9jc2ZMQT09>

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This research was supported by NSERC Discovery Grants awarded to Jonathan Fugelsang and Jennifer Stolz