

Humanization in the Trust Game: Beliefs mediate effect on prosocial behavior

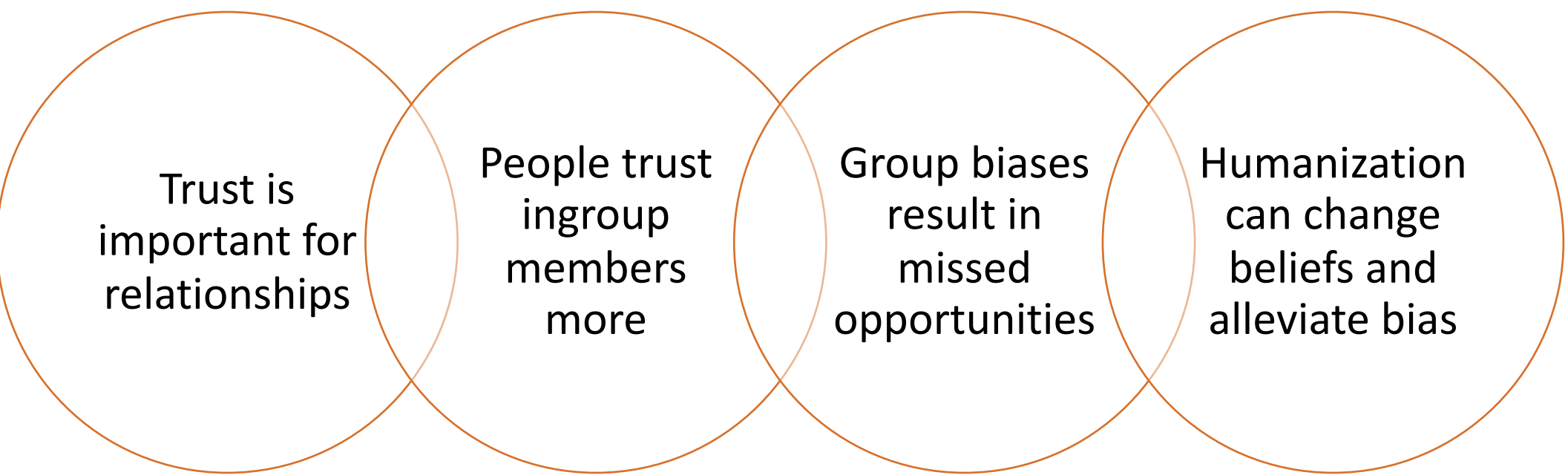
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Introduction

- People tend to have more favorable beliefs about people more like themselves, or ingroups, when attributing trust in a relationship and this yields to missed opportunities with outgroup members.
- We looked at whether introducing humanizing factors, such as someone’s favorite animal or TV show, could change people’s beliefs about their counterparts, and thus alleviate discrimination against outgroups in an economic context.

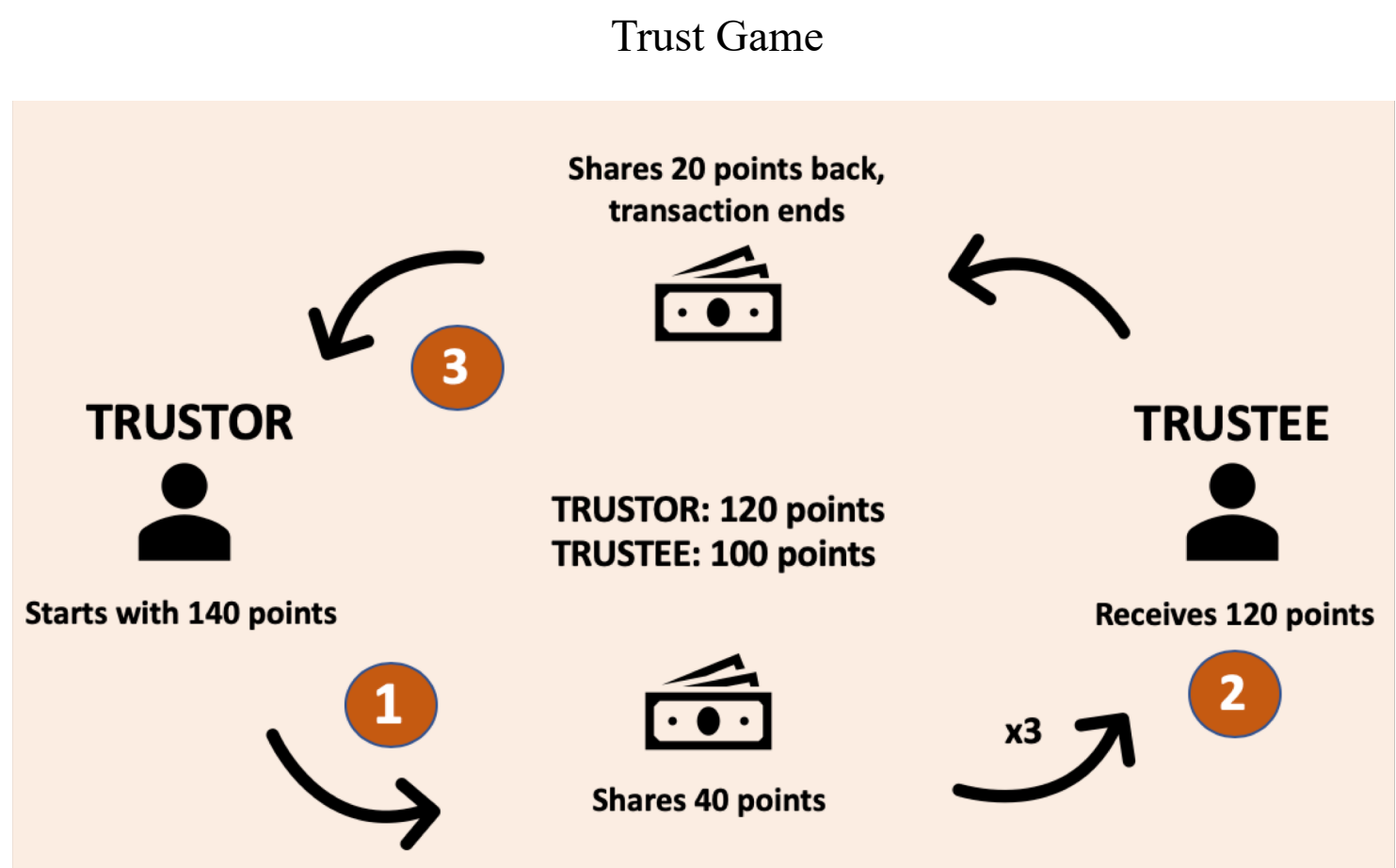


Beliefs about trust and trustworthiness

- First-order beliefs:
- Beliefs about what the counterpart will return
“I believe my counterpart will return 50 points to me”
- Second-order beliefs:
- Beliefs about what the counterpart expects
“I believe my counterpart believes I will send 40 points”

Methods

Trustees (N= 109)
Trustors (N=74)



- Ingroups and outgroups were created according to **political preferences** stated on a survey about:
abortion, gun control, government assistance, death penalty, same-sex marriage
- Humanization was manipulated using **personal preferences** stated on the same survey about:
ideal pet, preferred vacation destination, favorite movie, unusual food preference, interesting fact about self

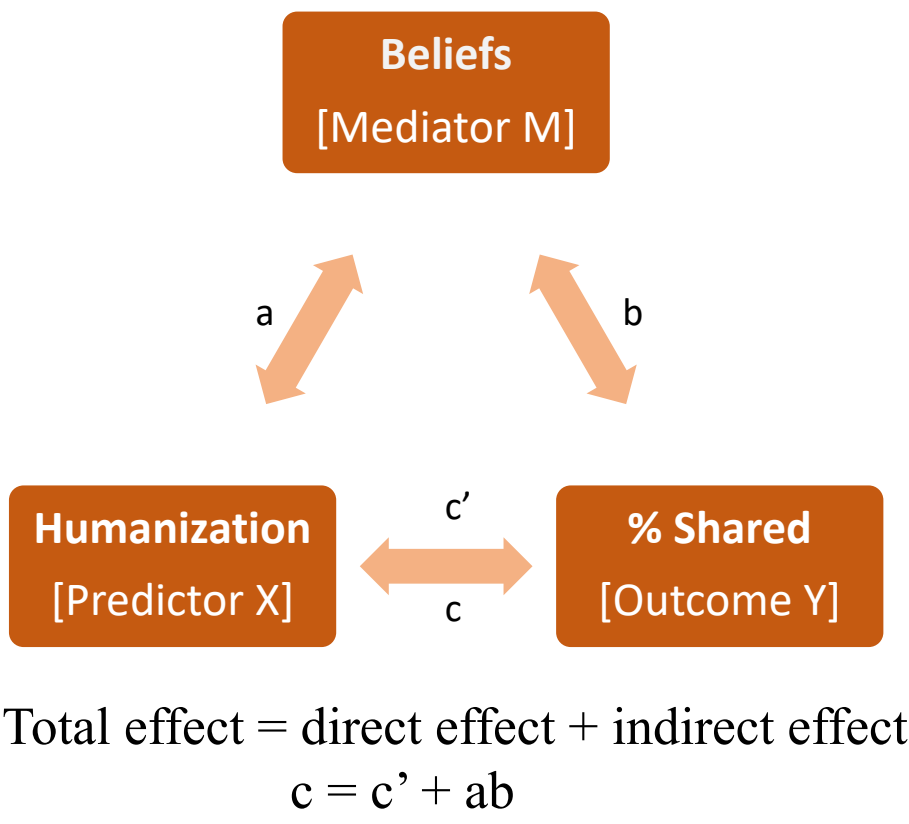
Hypothesis

Humanization improves beliefs about outgroup members and hurts beliefs about ingroup members, and results in increased prosocial behavior for outgroups and decreased for ingroups.

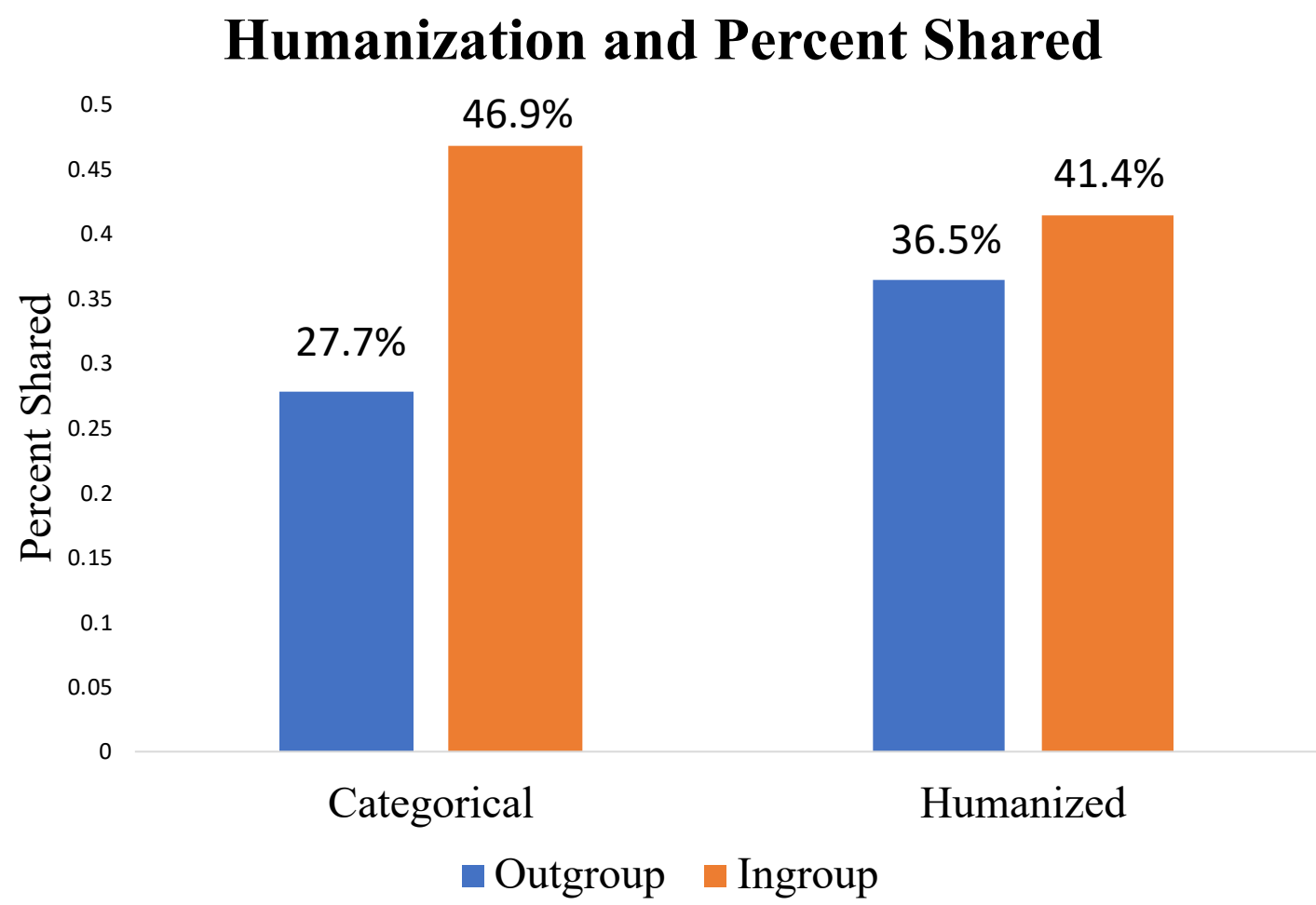
Results

Mediation Model (Baron & Kenny, 1986)

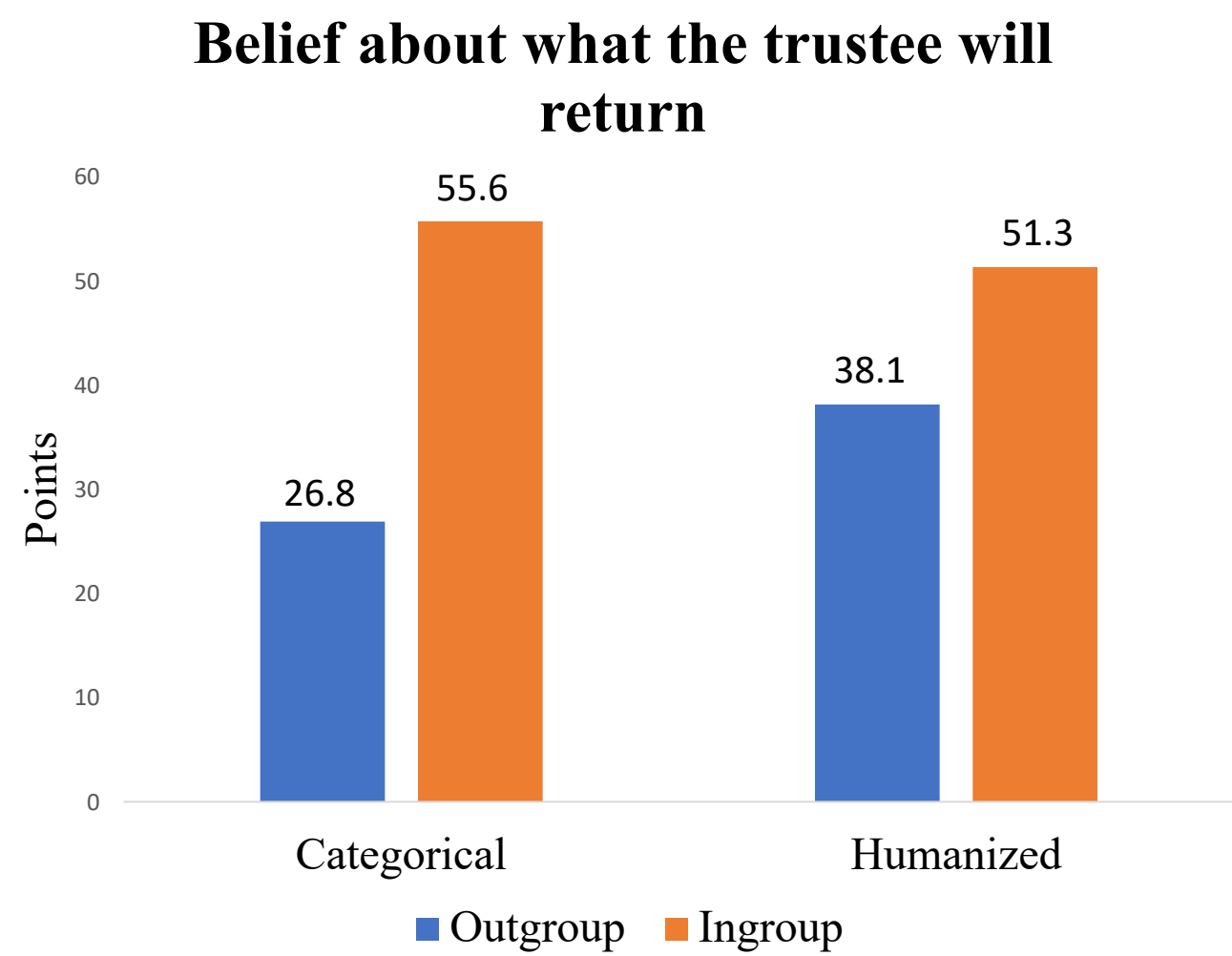
1. Tested for **path c** for **total effect**
Predictor X → Outcome Y
2. Tested for **path a**
Predictor X → Mediator M
3. Tested for **path b**
Mediator M → Outcome Y;
controlling for Predictor X
4. Tested for **path c’** for **direct effect**
Predictor X → Outcome Y;
controlling for Mediator M



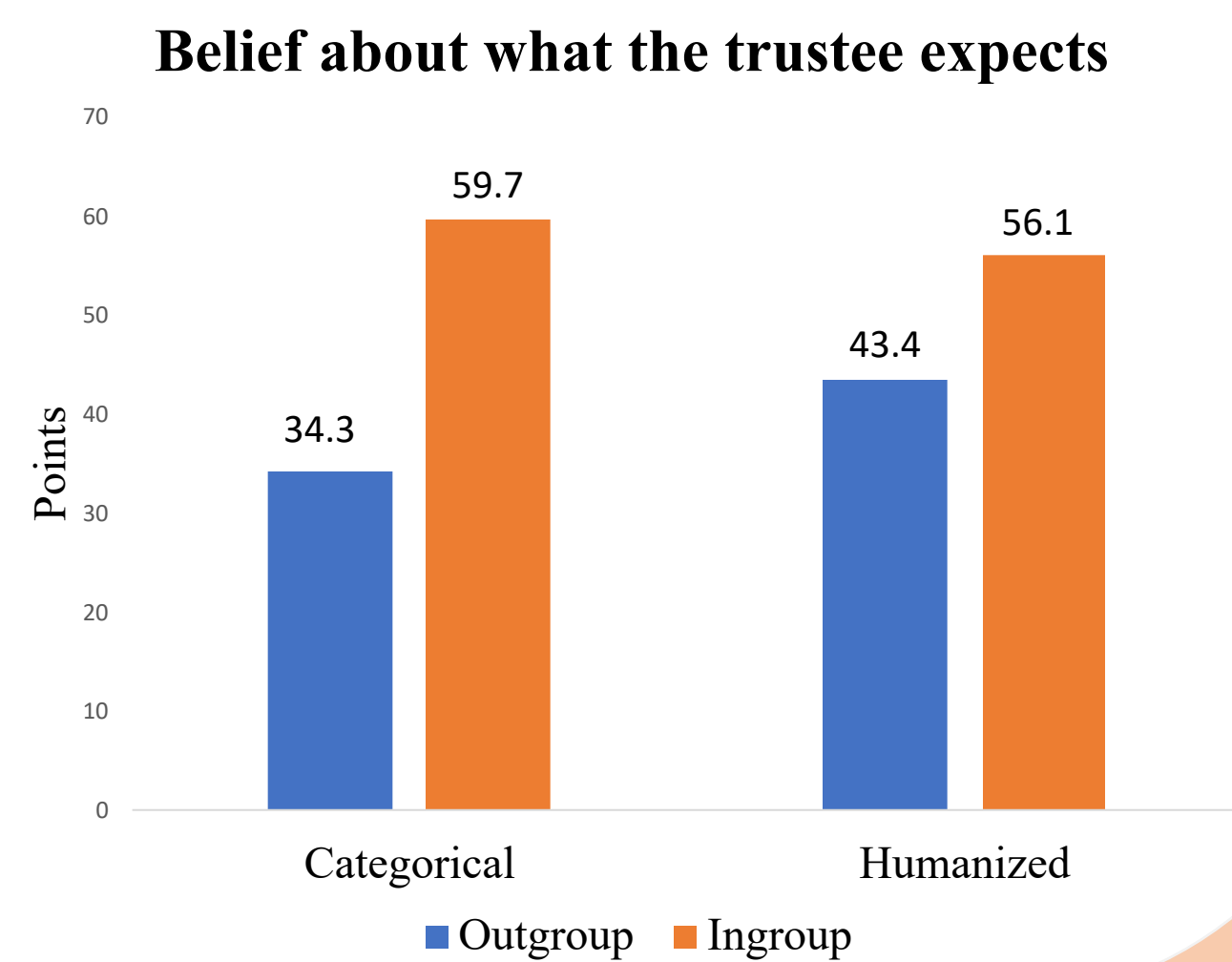
Testing path c
Total effect:



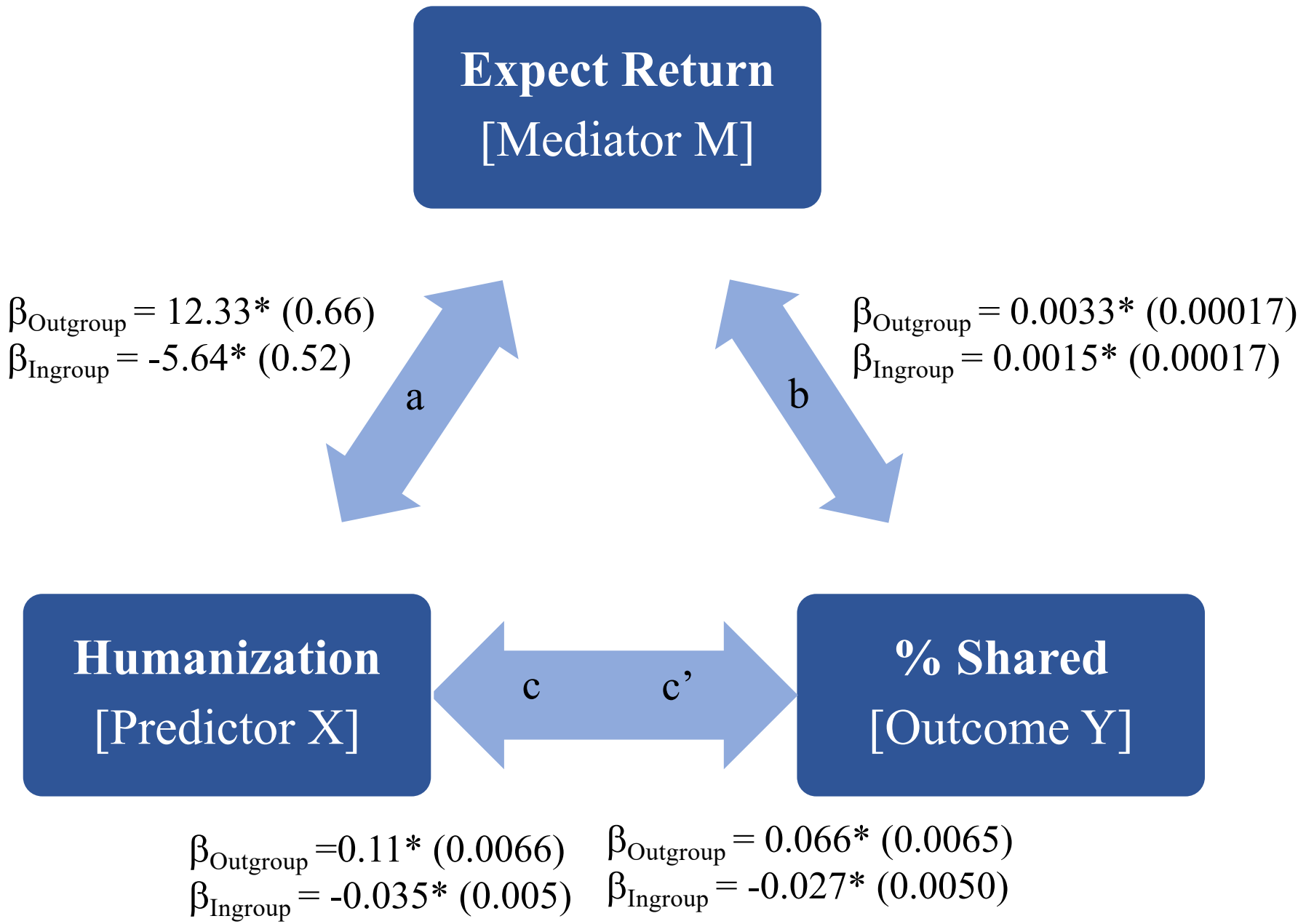
Testing path a
First-order beliefs:



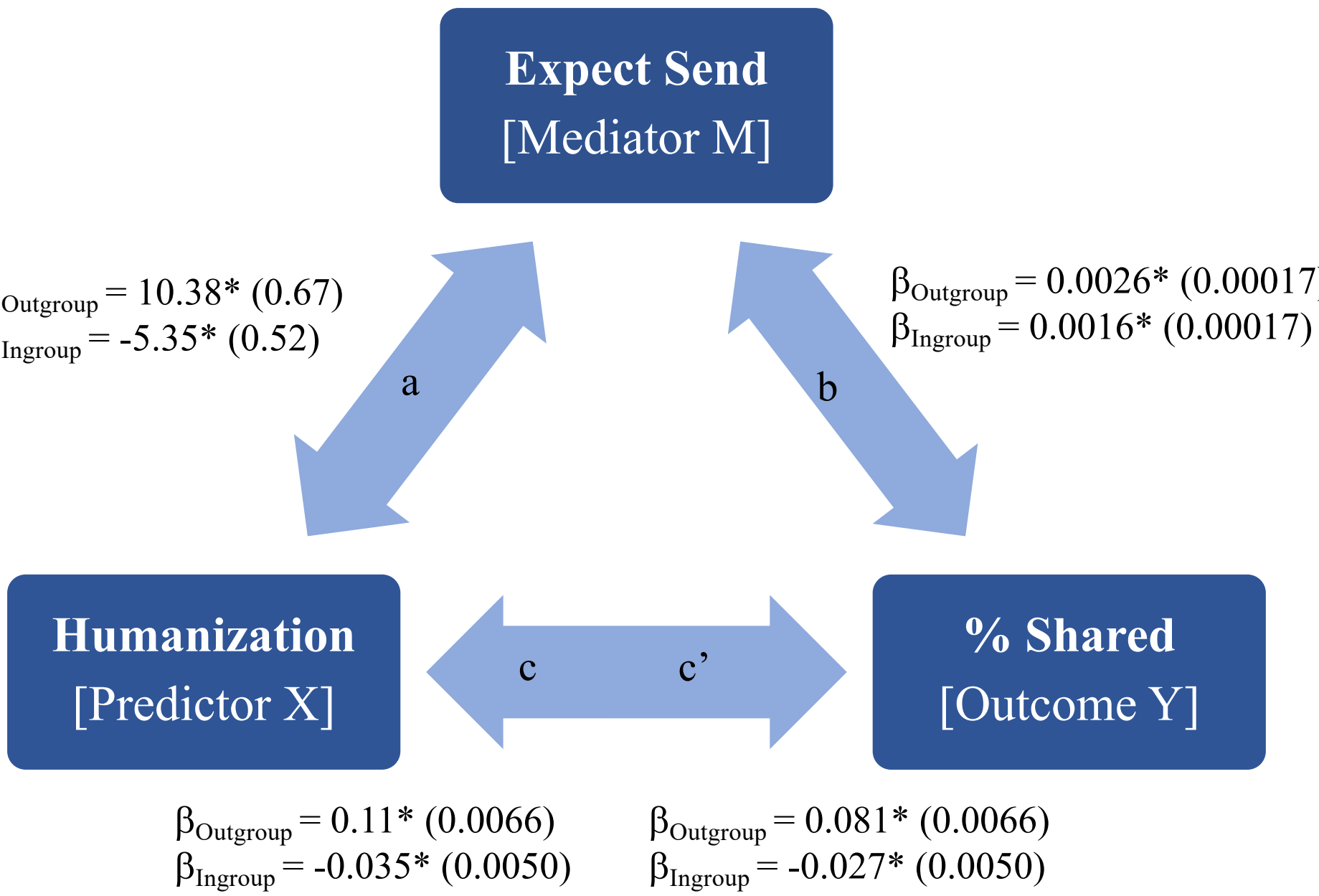
Testing path a
Second-order beliefs:



Results



- Our results show humanization’s effect on the percentage points shared is partially mediated by beliefs about what the trustee will return.



- Our results show humanization’s effect on the percentage points shared is partially mediated by beliefs about what trustors believe the trustees expect them to send.

Discussion

- Humanization improves beliefs about the outgroup, and increases prosocial behavior towards outgroup members
- Humanization hurts beliefs about ingroup, and decreases prosocial behavior towards ingroup members
- Humanization can alleviate bias by improving beliefs about outgroup members, yet might come at a cost for ingroup members as it hurts beliefs

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