

Introduction

- There is a common bias to believe one's self to be morally superior to others (Tappin & McKay 2017).
- Religious individuals tend to enhance their perceived level of morality and attribute their morality to religious sources (Galen, 2018; Gebauer, Sedikides, Schrade, 2017).
- Moral Foundations Theory (Graham & Haidt, 2010) suggests two types of moral foundations: individualizing and group-binding concerns.
- We investigated whether moral foundations are reactive to (bogus) moral feedback as evidenced by self-enhancement, negative reactions to negative feedback and religious attributions for morality.

Methods

Procedure

- Participants completed measures of moral behaviors (e.g., charitable donations, volunteering) and the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2008).
- MFQ scales were summed into Individualizing (e.g., "Compassion for those who are suffering is crucial") and Binding ("People should be loyal to their family members") foundations
- Self-Rated Morality relative to others.

Participant Demographics

- Students from PSY 101 (N =222)
- Seventy-four percent female

Post-Feedback Procedure

Moral Attribution

- Participants were asked: "what is your morality based on, or motivated by?"
- Attributions were coded for religious themes (e.g., "My morality is based on my faith").
- Structured moral motivation attributions were assessed using forced choice slider categories: internal emotions, religion, self-interest, parental influence.

Feedback Evaluation

- "What did you think of the feedback you received on your moral inventory?"
- Responses coded for: Acceptance as fair (e.g., "It seemed accurate") vs. negative reaction, surprise, or disappointment ("I thought my morality would be different"; "It seemed too high").

Pre-Feedback Measure Results

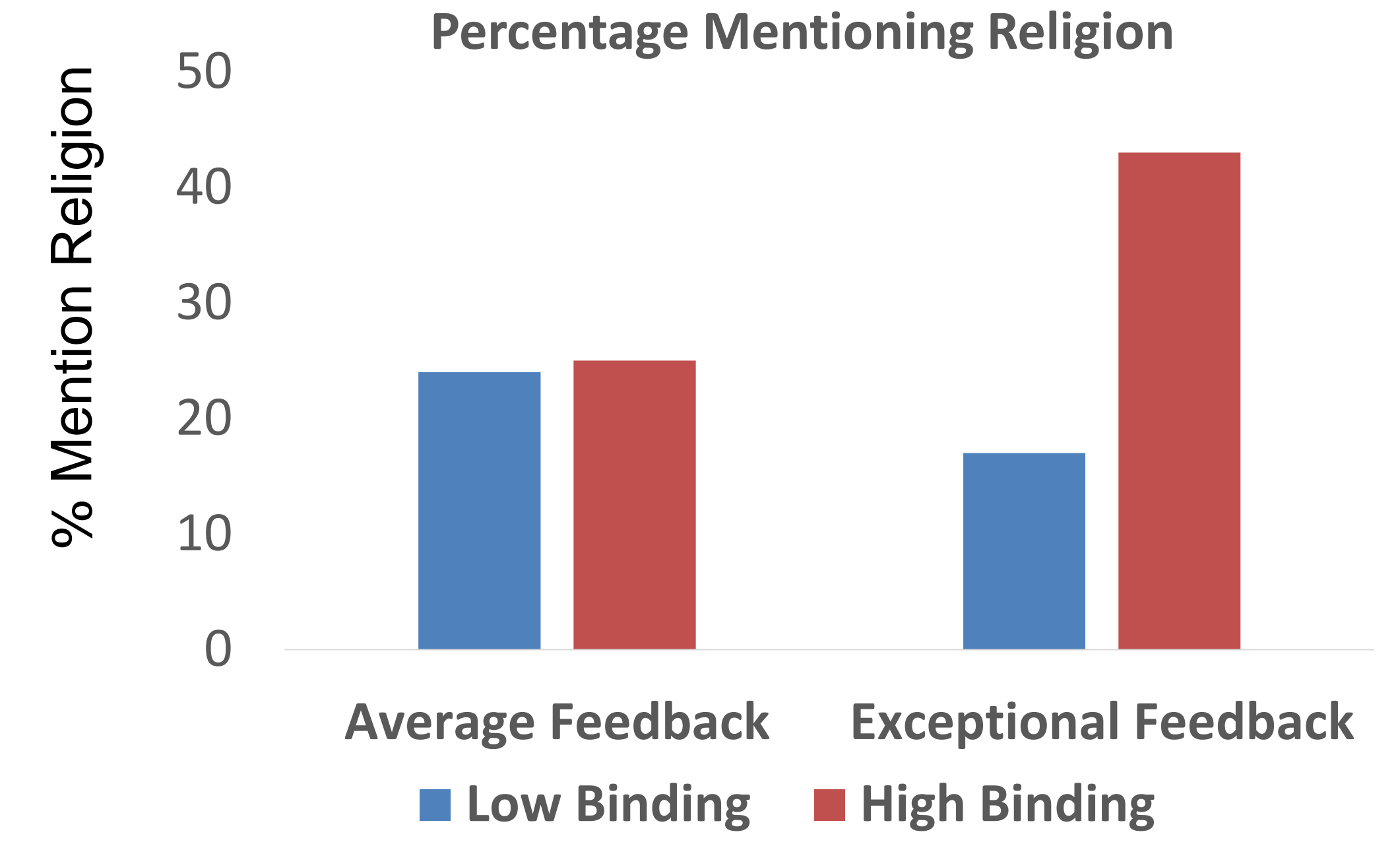
- The only significant correlation was between Binding Foundations and self-rated overall morality (relative to others).

	IF	BF	MB	SRM
Individualizing Found.	-	.10	.09	.05
Binding Found.		-	.03	.25**
Moral Behaviors			-	.00
Self-Rated Morality				-

Results

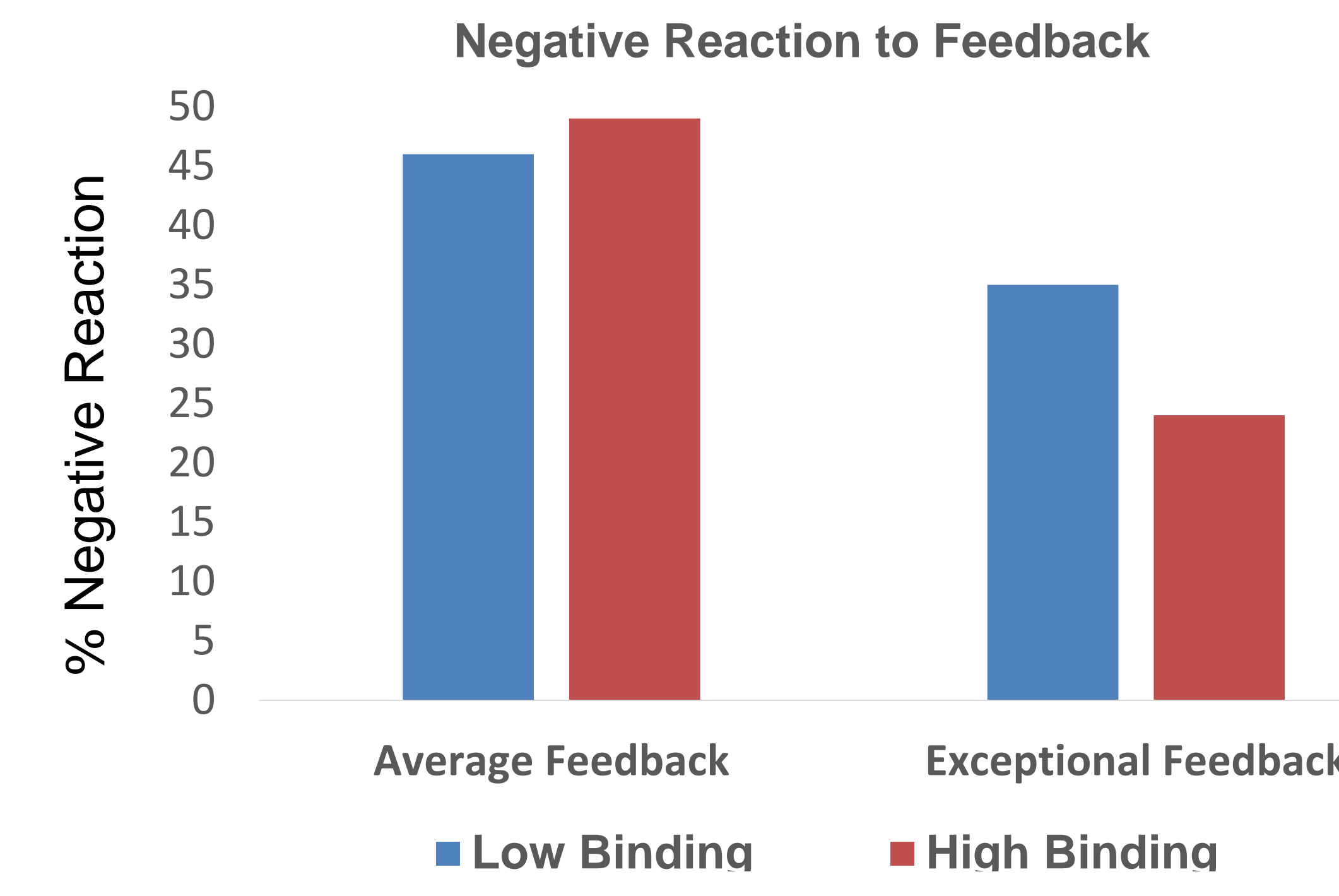
Post-Feedback Verbal Coding of Moral Attributions

Logistic regression analyses predicting making religious moral attributions indicated an interaction between binding moral foundations and high moral feedback condition ($Wald = 6.47, p = .01$).



Those high in binding morality spontaneously mentioned religious motivations more frequently when given exceptionally high moral feedback

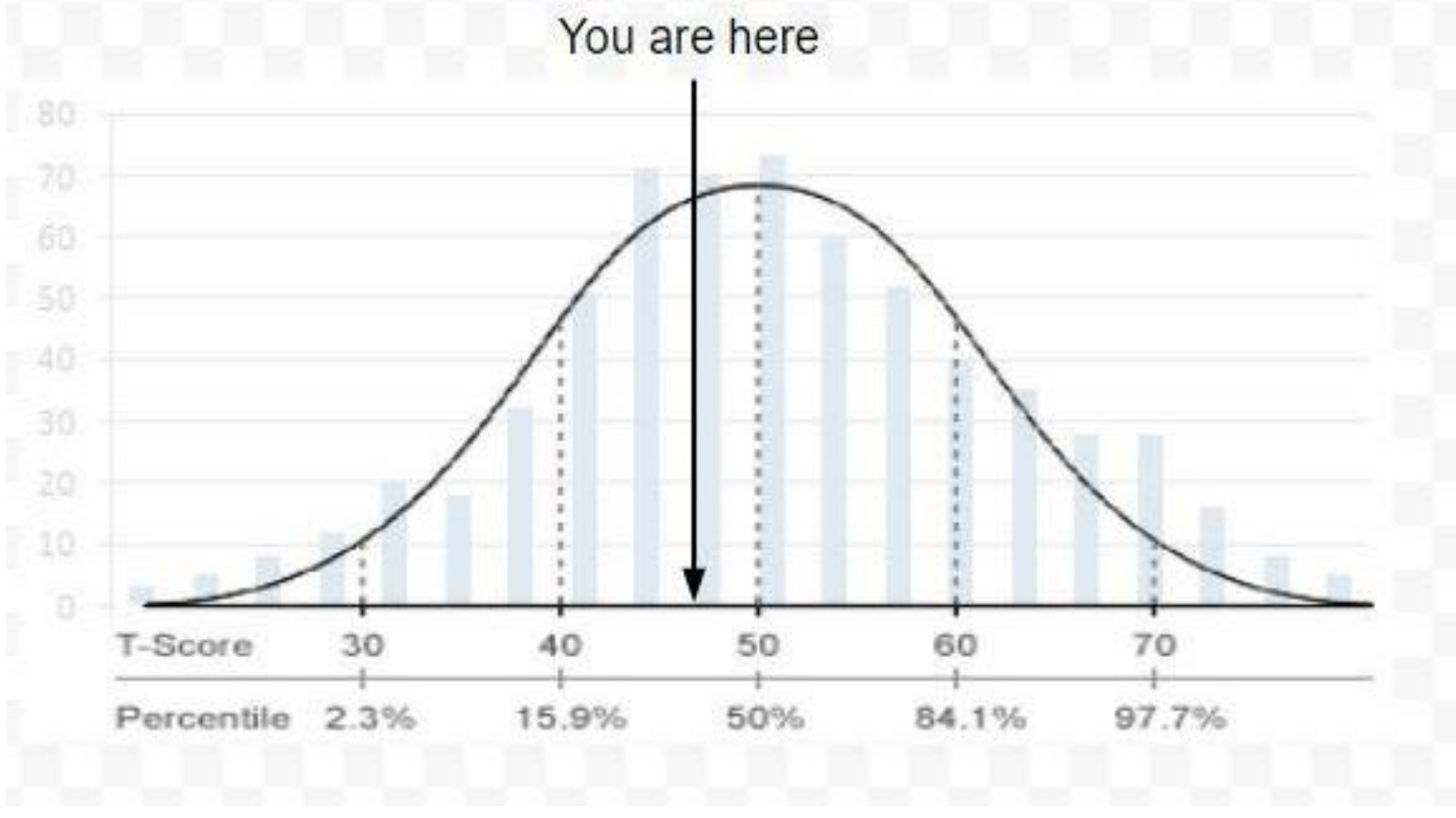
Analysis of variance predicting binding foundation scores indicated a significant interaction between negative reaction to feedback and feedback condition $F_{(3, 206)} = 4.04, p < .05$.



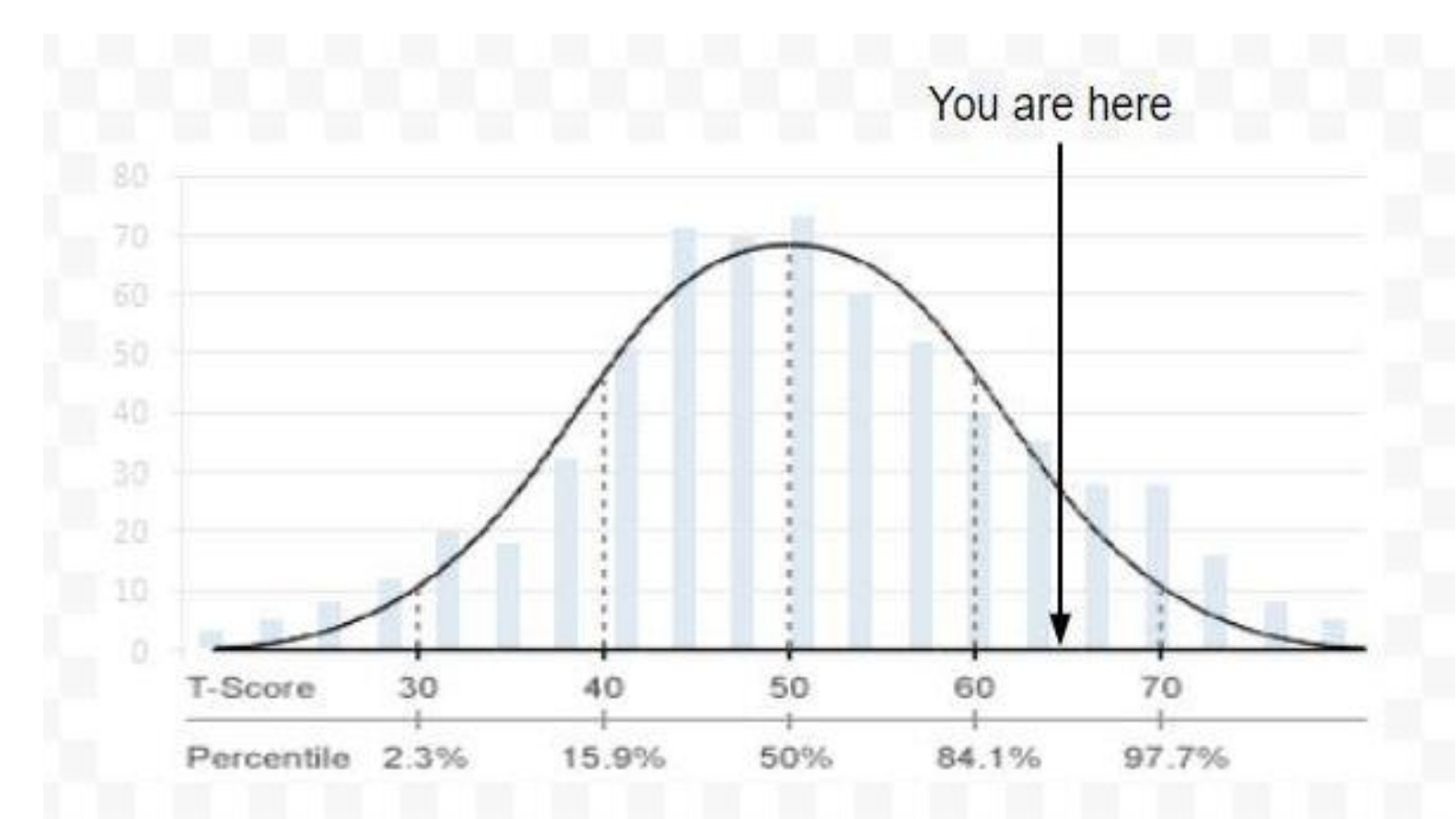
High binding scorers were more accepting of exceptionally high feedback relative to low binders.

False Feedback Procedure

- After the moral measures they received false feedback that was either average ("You scored in the 45 percentile of morality") or exceptionally high ("90%").



Average Feedback



Exceptional Feedback

Conclusions

- Binding foundation morality is associated with self-enhancement in the form of higher self-rated morality in the absence of higher moral behaviors.
- High binding morality is related to attributions of morality to religious influence and greater acceptance of exceptionally high moral feedback. By contrast, low binding is associated with moral humility.
- High binding foundations are particularly susceptible to self-enhancement
- The enhancing function of religious moral attributions plays a greater role for high binding moral foundations.
- These effects were manifested in spontaneous verbal responses rather than forced choice measures, indicating possible differences in conscious awareness of moral attributions.