

Background

Self-control is associated with moral behavior. Traditional theory suggests self-control inhibits antisocial impulses, which everyone experiences. However, recent work outside the moral domain suggests that self-control facilitates goal-pursuit by automatization of that process, thereby reducing temptations.

Summary of Studies 1 – 3

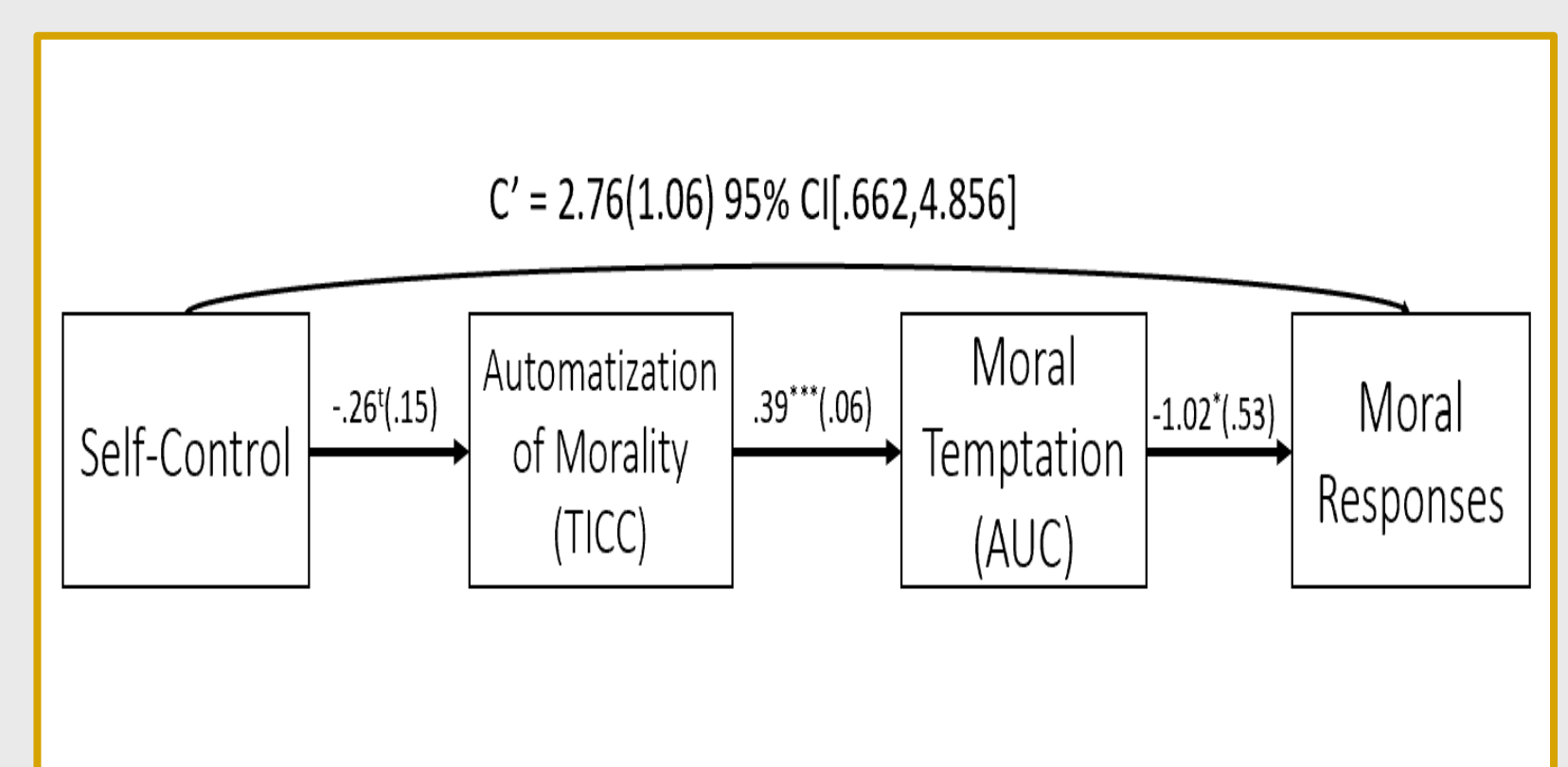
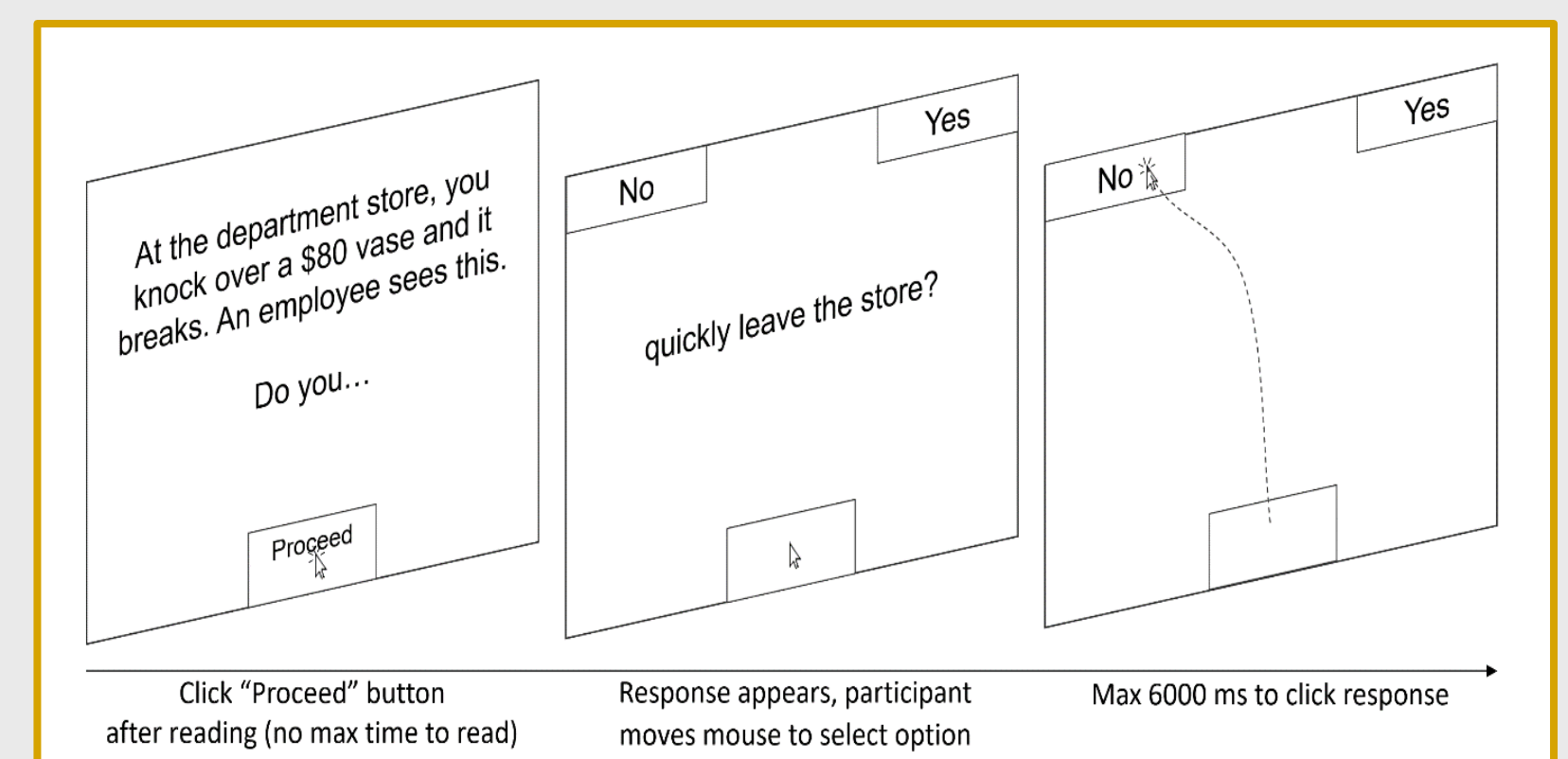
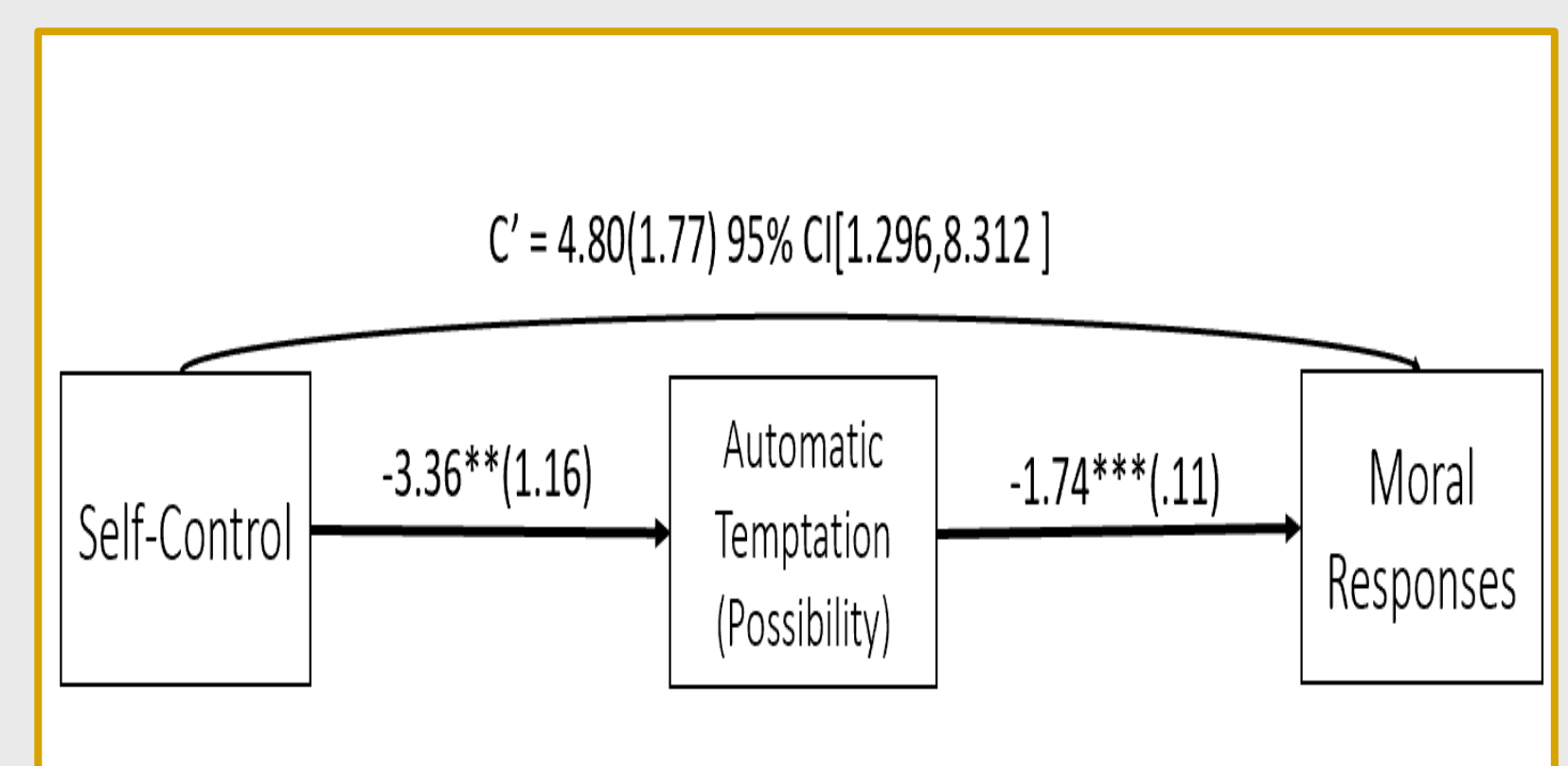
I suggest and found support for the hypothesis that self-control facilitates moral decision making through automatization, and, subsequently, lower temptation to violate proscriptive norms (i.e., *should not*s; e.g., to lie, steal, cheat, harm).

Study 1 experimentally manipulated the level of conflict of moral decisions to show that self-control predicts more moral decision making when people face (vs. do not face) temptation.

Study 2 demonstrated that people higher (vs. lower) in self-control make more moral decisions, and this is accounted for in part by their automatically classifying immoral decisions as impossible (vs. possible).

Study 3 employed an online, behavioral measure of conflict—mouse-tracking, and a novel metric that estimates the time of initiating correct (moral) categorization (decision) (TICC).

Decisions of higher (vs. lower) self-control individuals resulted in earlier avoidance of the wrong choice (i.e., TICC) and, consequently, lower total conflict (i.e., AUC).



Conclusion and Future Directions

Across operationalizations, self-control is associated with lower levels of automatization and, in turn, temptation in moral decision making.

Future directions entail intensive, longitudinal ecological momentary assessment of links among self-control, automatization, temptation, and moral decision making.