The influence of mood and generating personal connections on mind-wandering during reading

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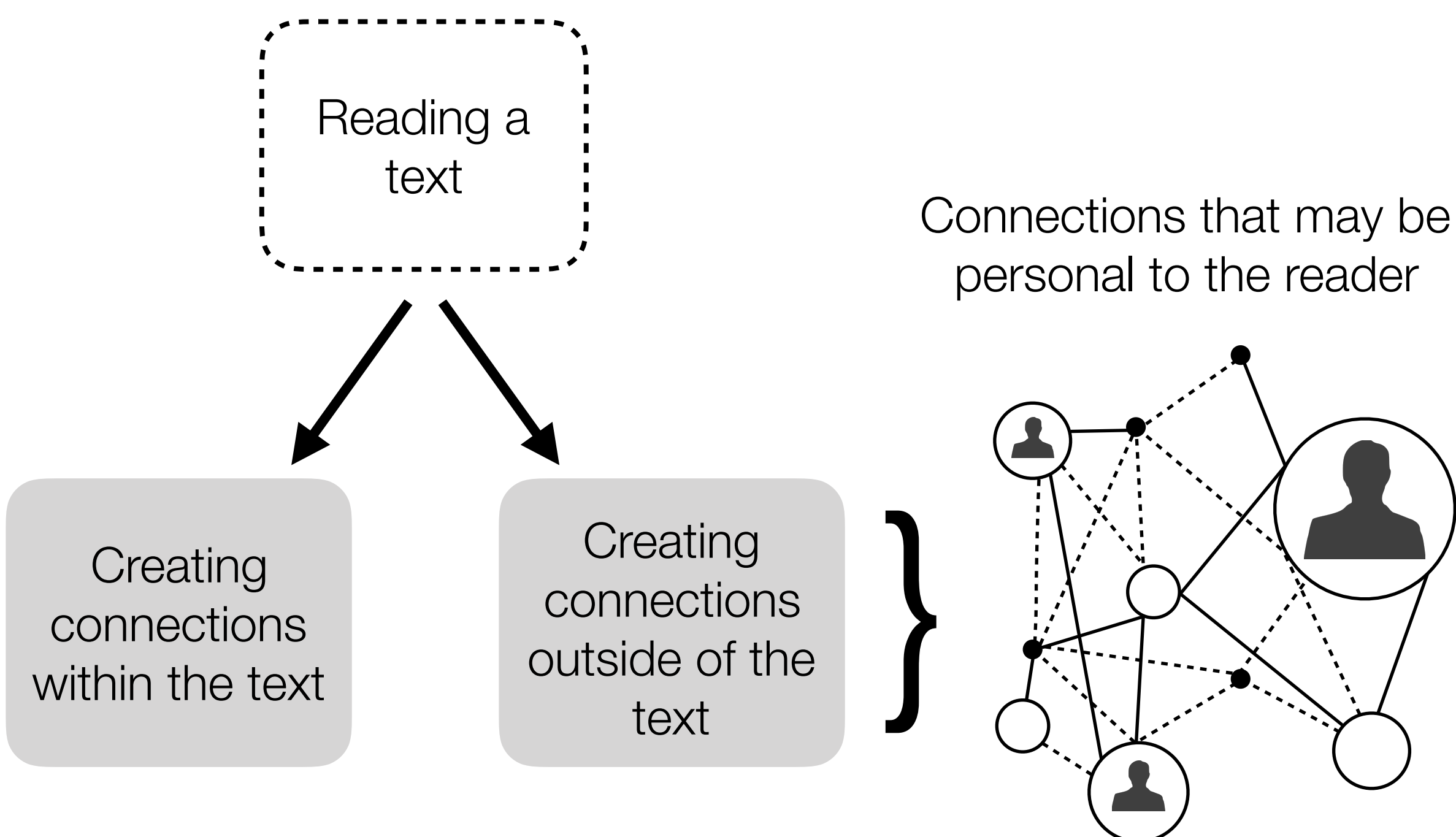
Background: Mood influences the way we process information

Mood	Processing Style	Comprehension
+	Flexible, reliance on general world knowledge	More text-based inferential processes
-	Analytic, systematic, detail-oriented	Deeper comprehension and reasoning

Mood & Mind-wandering

Happy moods have been linked to task-related thought.

Sad and depressed moods have been linked to task-*unrelated* thought (TUT).

Reading Comprehension

Reading a text

Creating connections within the text

Creating connections outside of the text

Connections that may be personal to the reader

Our approach:

Evaluate content of task-related & -unrelated thought with respect to **happy** and **sad** moods

Dimensions of Thought

Off-Task?

No — Yes

Personal Connection?

No

Yes
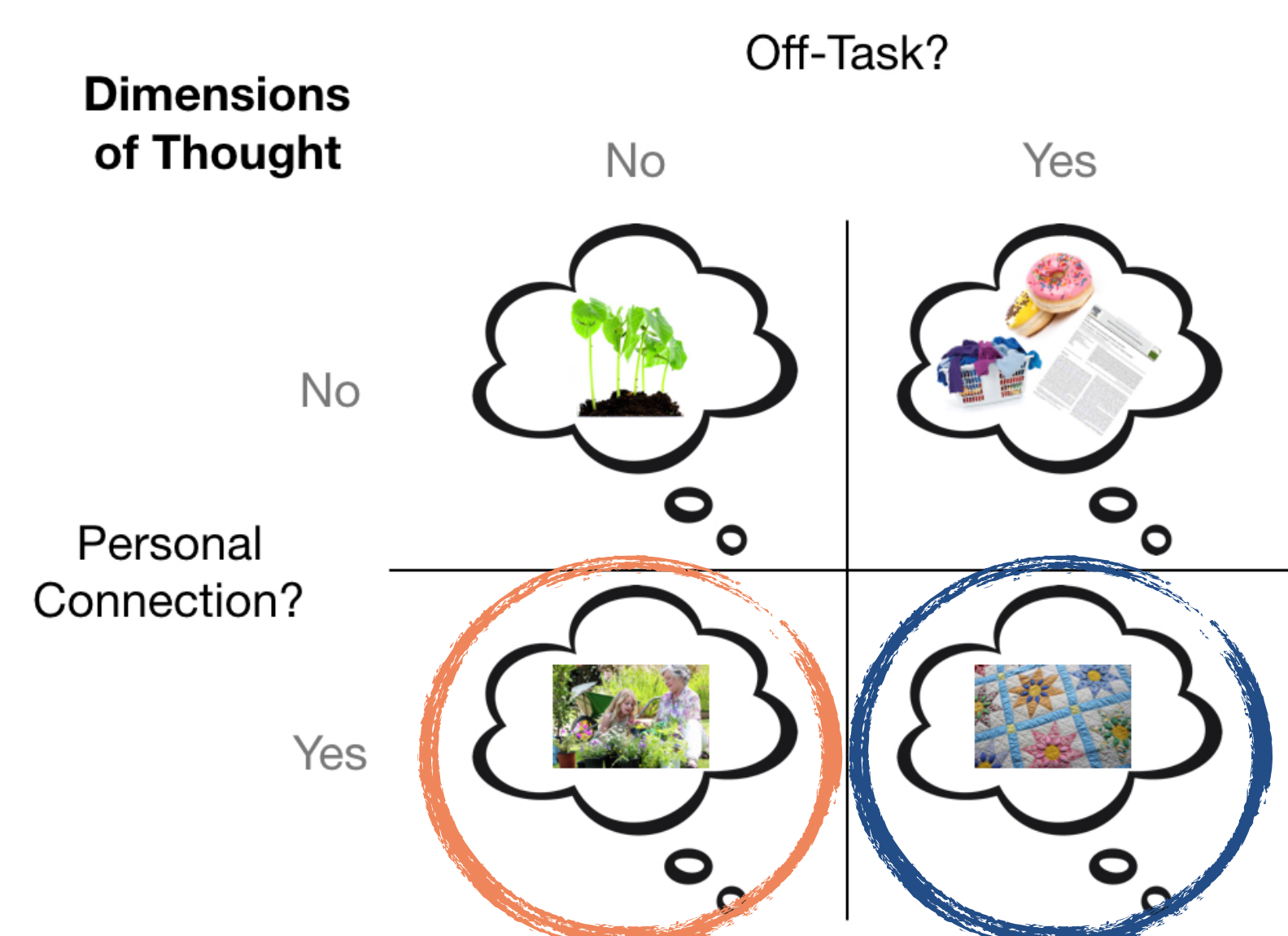
Method overview:

- 159 Participants (M_{age}= 19; range: 18-51)
- Induced happy or sad mood with videos
- Read nine paragraphs about wine & wine-making
- Probed about their thoughts and mood during each paragraph
- Retention for each paragraph was assessed via coding participant
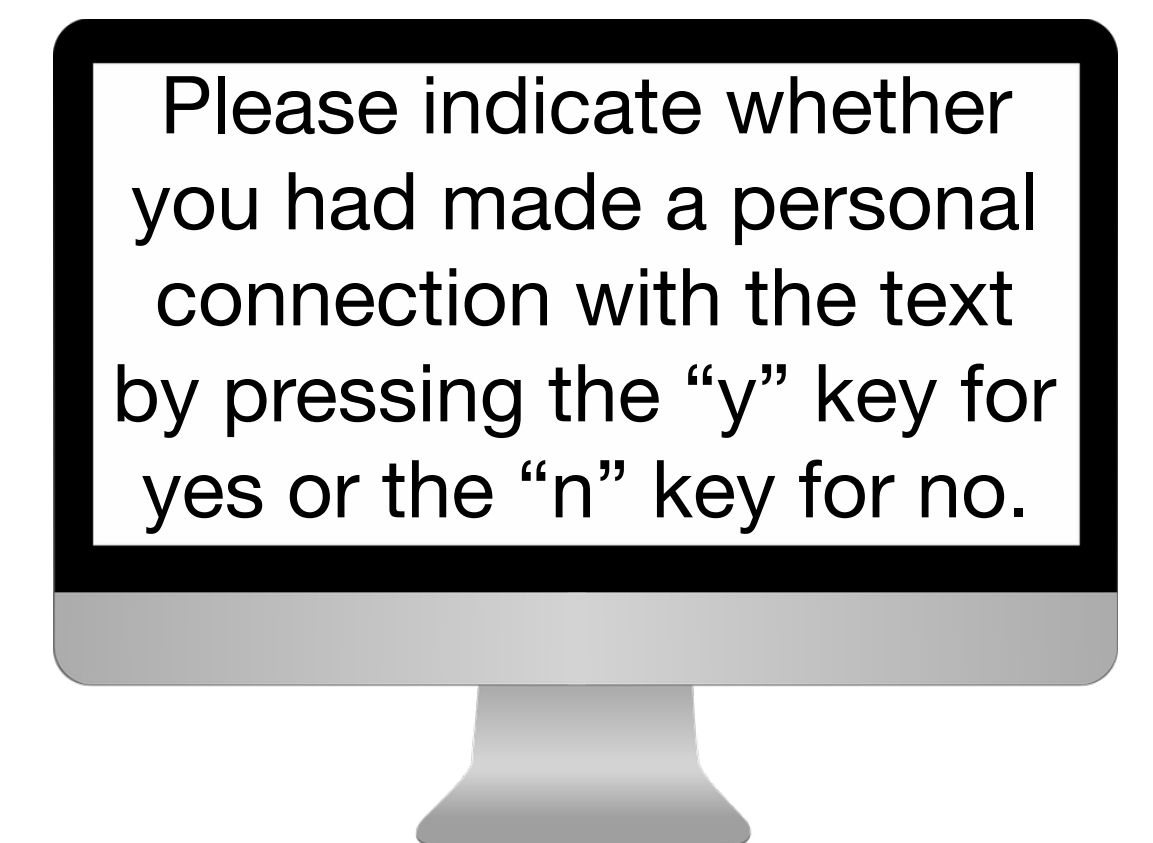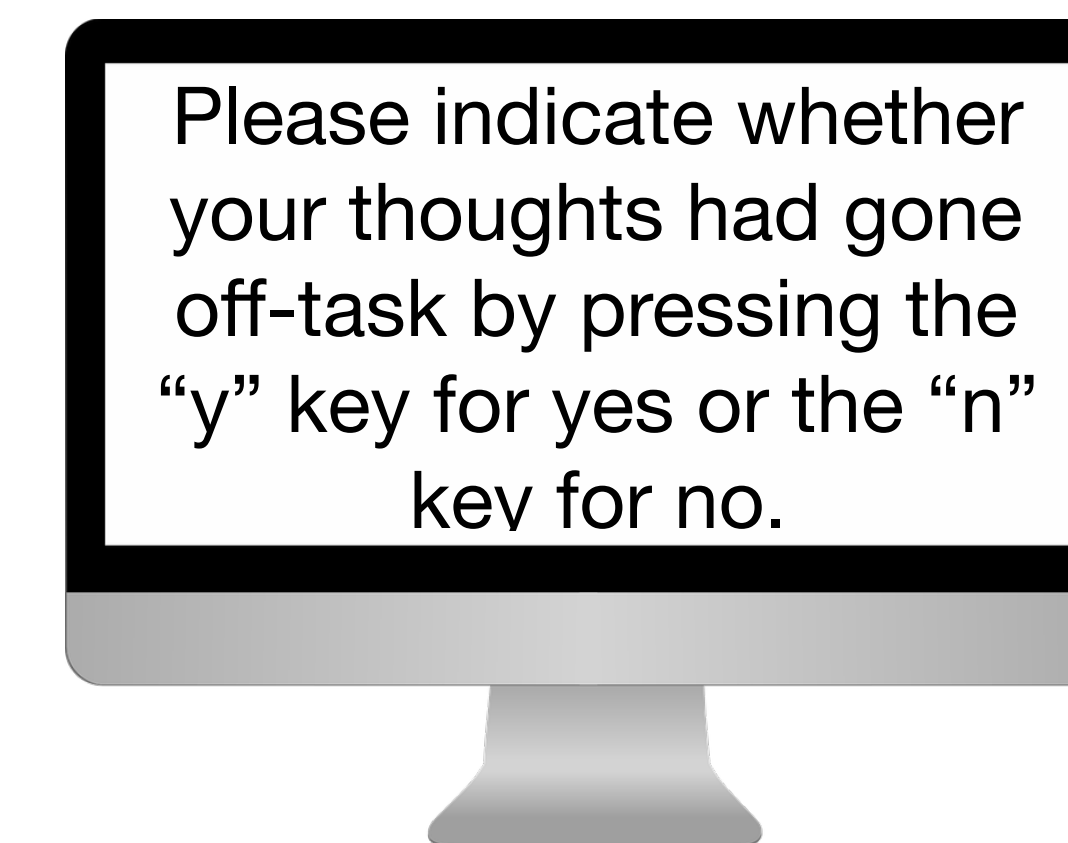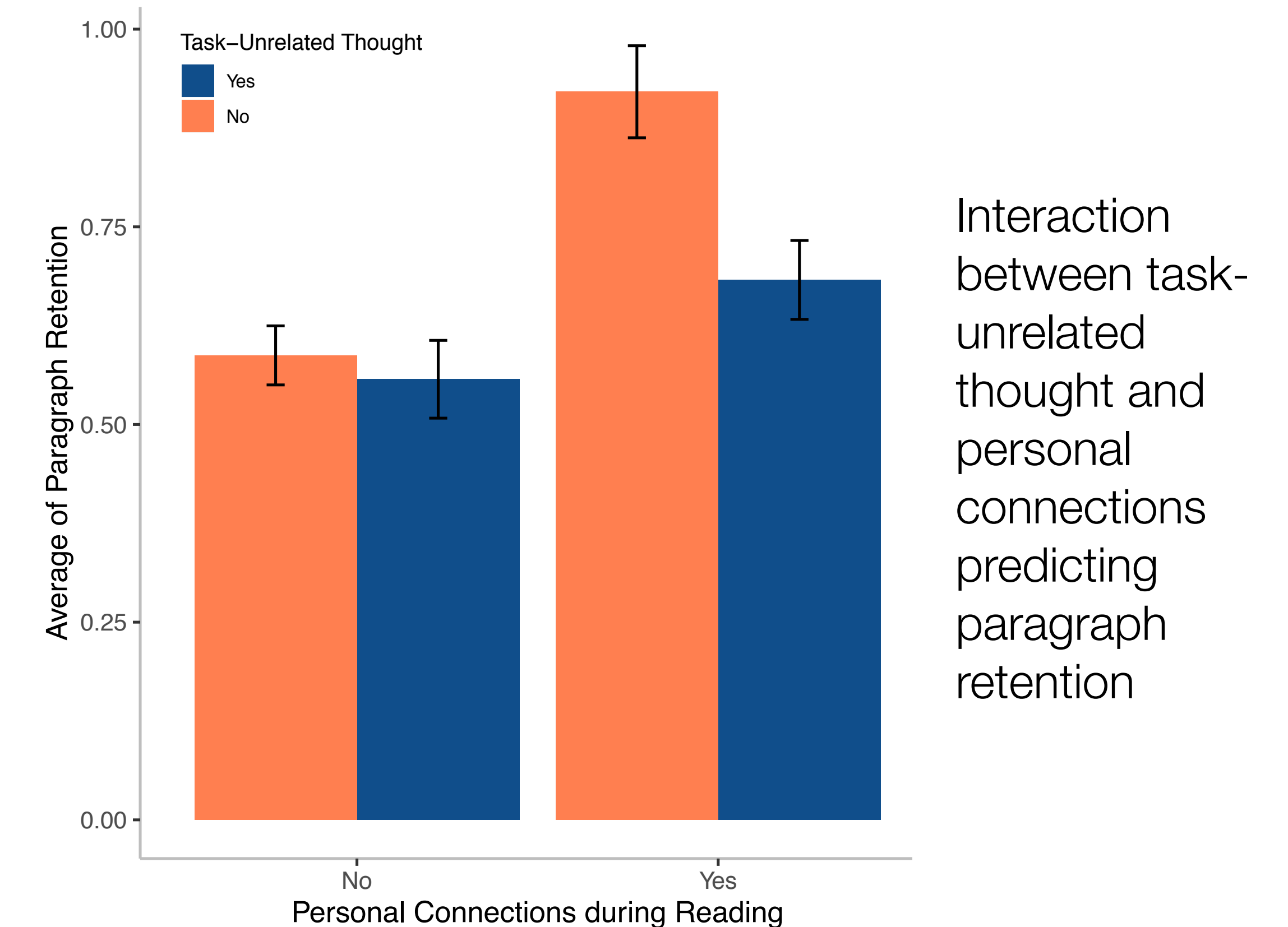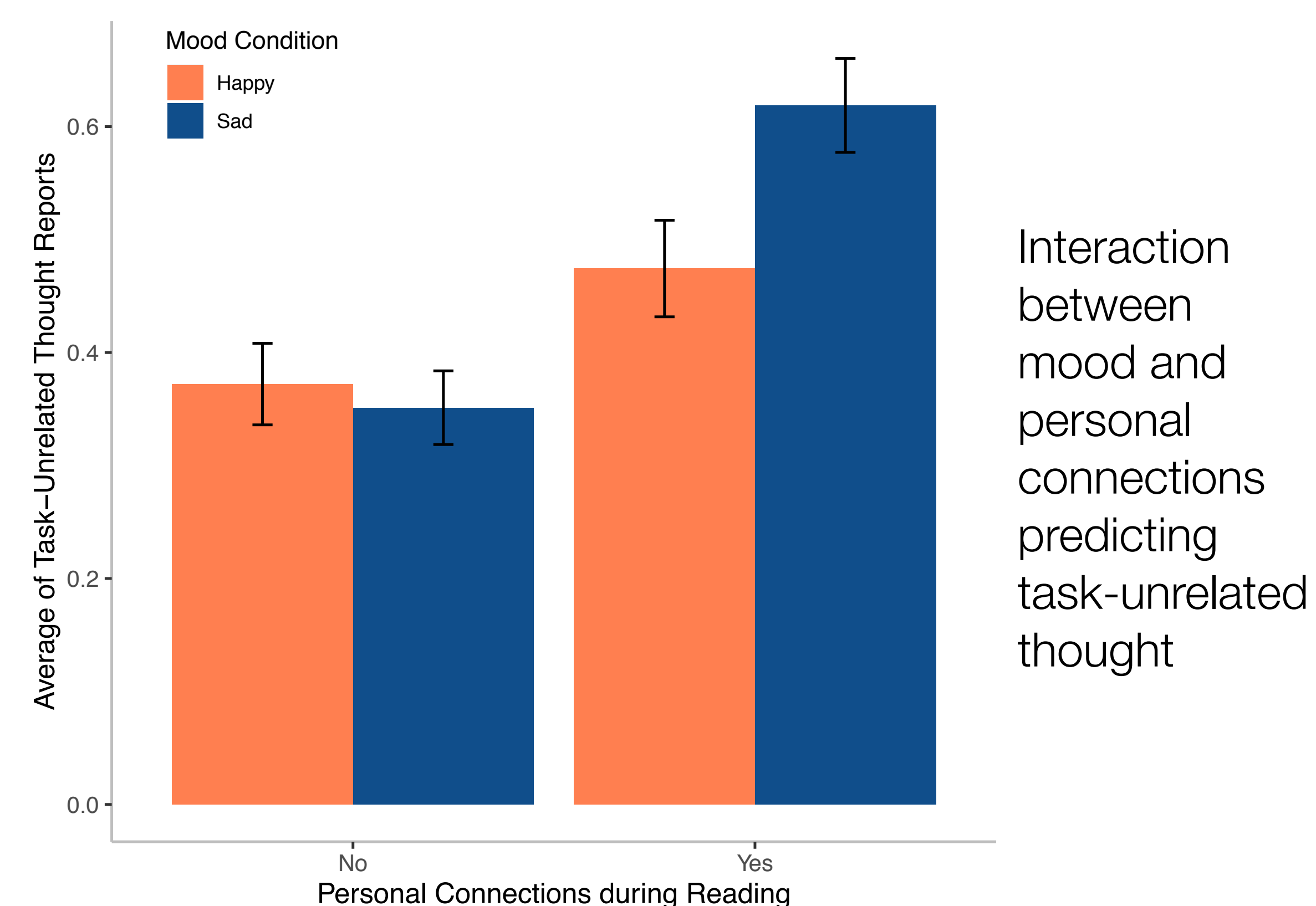
Emotion induction

Sad Condition

Happy Condition

Probes during reading

Please indicate whether your thoughts had gone off-task by pressing the "y" key for yes or the "n" key for no.

Please indicate whether you had made a personal connection with the text by pressing the "y" key for yes or the "n" key for no.

Results:

Mood Condition
- Happy
- Sad

Average of Task-Unrela...

Personal Connections during Reading
No — Yes

mood and personal connections predicting task-unrelated thought

Task−Unrelated Thought
- Yes
- No

Average of Paragrap...

Personal Connections during Reading
No — Yes

Interaction between task-unrelated thought and personal connections predicting paragraph retention

Conclusion

1. Personal connections led to better summaries of the text.
2. Mood and personal connections interacted to predict task-unrelated thought.
   - Sad moods facilitated more task-unrelated thought and personal connections.
3. Task-unrelated thought and personal connections interacted to predict retention.
   - Readers who stayed on-task and reported generating a personal connection retained the most information from the text.