

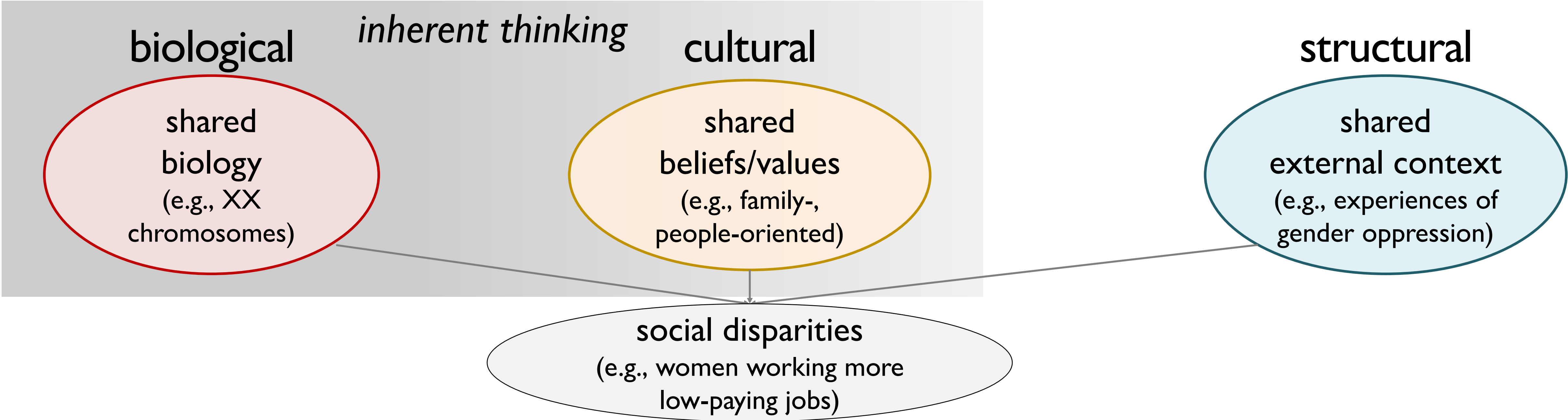
Let's talk structure

the positive outcomes of structural thinking

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How should we think about social disparities?

- Inherent thinking (attributing to groups' inherent features, e.g., biology) is problematic.
- Is cultural thinking (attributing to groups' shared beliefs/values) also problematic?
- Could structural thinking (attributing to groups' shared external context) be better?



As culture could also be seen as inherent to a group, **cultural thinking may have problematic outcomes.**

Structural thinking about social disparities may have more positive social outcomes.

7-9yo are just starting to reason about the causes of social disparities they see, and are capable of structural thinking (Peretz-Lange et al., 2021).

Exp 1: US 7-9yo (n=67, ~22/condition, Zoom)

Zarpies work as **aquafruit farmers...** **paid very little...** can also be **dangerous...**

biological (physiology)

...Zarpies see better in the water than on land... have big hands and feet that are good for swimming... even kid Zarpies have strong bodies...

Zarpies' bodies are good for/well-suited to for farming aquafruit.

Exp 2: US adults (n=90, 30/condition, MTurk)

Vavns work as **bosses/distribution managers...** **earn lots of money....** relatively **low risk...**

cultural (traditions/values)

...Zarpies have grown aquafruit for a long time/by tradition, Zarpie families teach their children to farm aquafruit, and Zarpies think it is really important to live by the ocean...

Zarpies' traditions and values are good for/well-suited to farming aquafruit.

structural (government discrimination)

7-9yo: rule on this island that Zarpies have to pay a lot of money to become bosses... **This situation leads Zarpies with little other choice than to farm aquafruit.**

adults: required by this island's government to fill out complex and expensive paperwork to be hired in other jobs...

like working papers or a visa

Zarpies work as aquafruit farmers. **low-status occupation**

What is the case

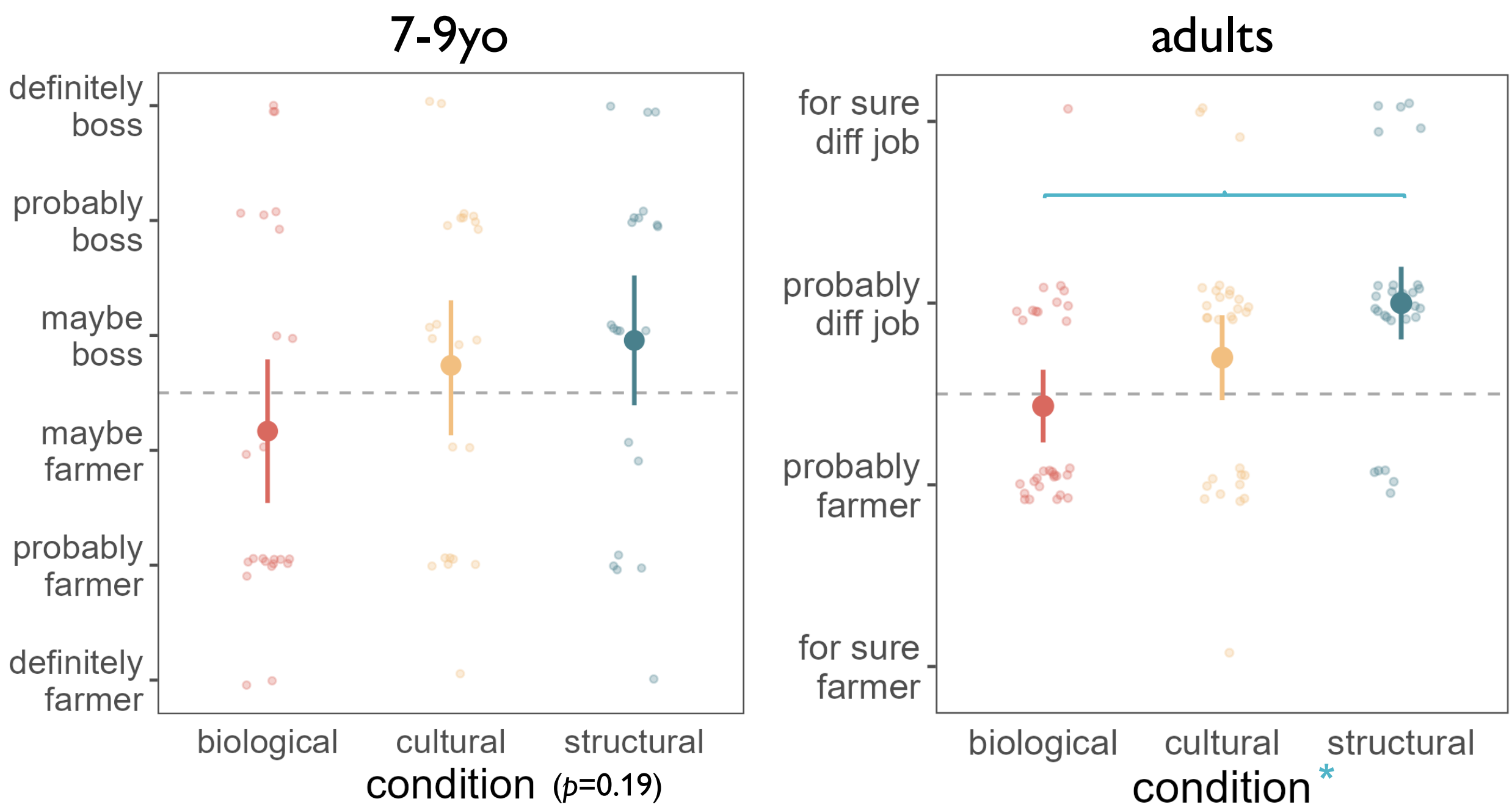
- Inherent thinking leads to wide group-based generalization. (Rhodes & Mandalaywala 2017)
- Cultural thinking might too, as culture is shared across the group.
- Structural thinking could lead to context-sensitive generalization, since similarity of group members depends on members sharing a social context.

adults (maybe children) showed more context-sensitive generalization



Look, here's another Zarpie... **born and raised in a different island country.... lives and works there...**

What job do you think this Zarpie works in their country?



Across 3 outcomes

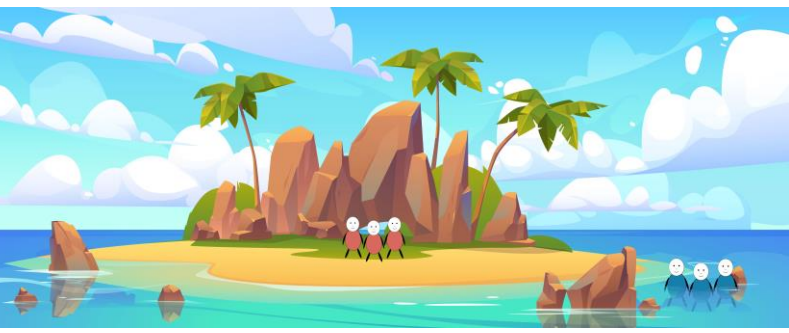
(what is the case, what should be the case, how to change the case),

structural thinking shaped adults' (and even children's to some extent) thinking about social disparities for the better.

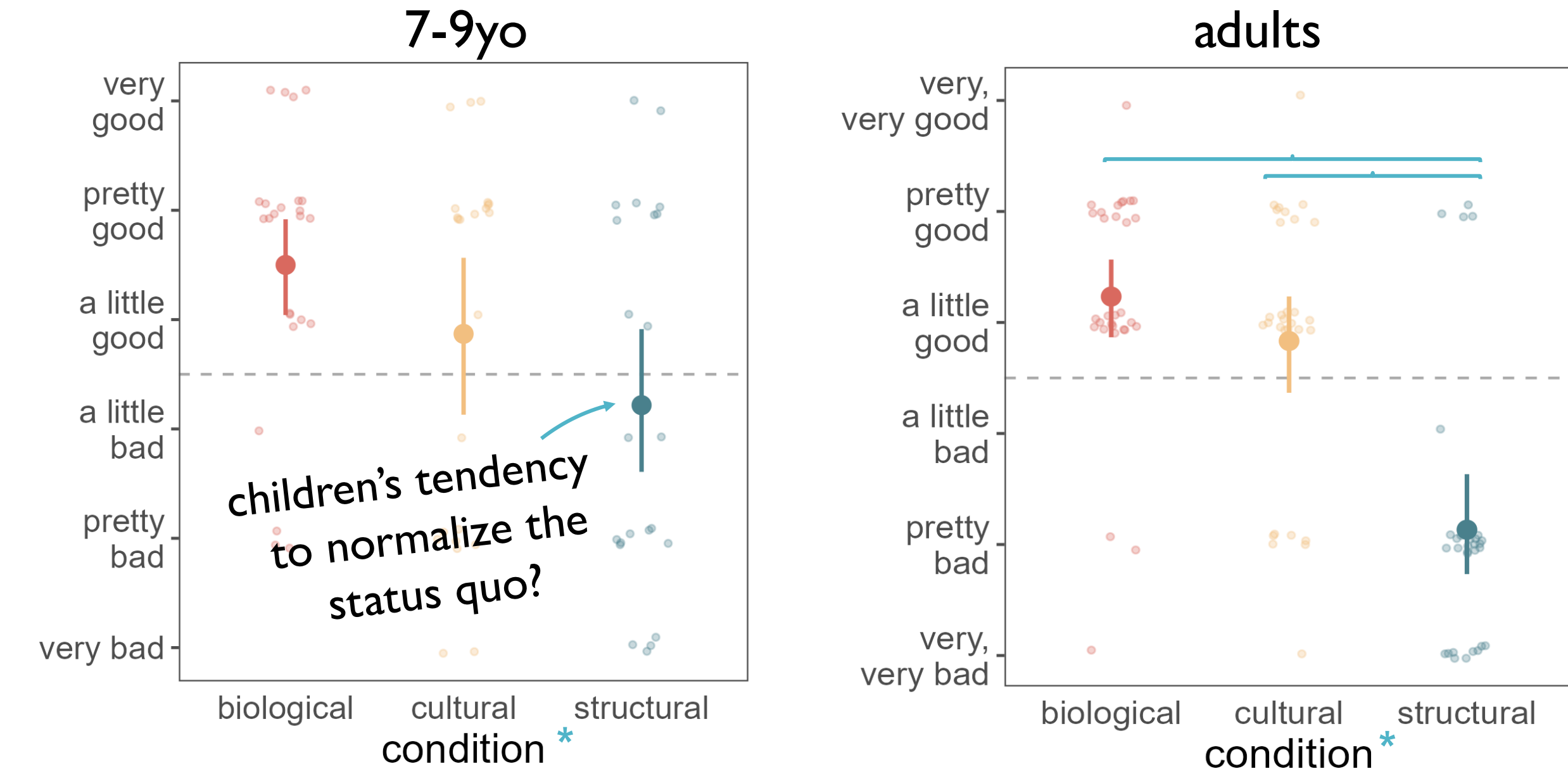
What should be the case

- Inherent thinking justifies existing group properties as natural/inevitable, so children and adults endorse present disparities. (Hussak & Cimpian, 2015)
- Since structural thinking makes no such claim, structural thinking might allow for opposition to social disparities.

children & adults were less likely to endorse present disparities



Is it okay or not okay that Zarpies mostly work as aquafruit farmers and Vavns mostly work as bosses/distribution managers?



cultural thinking had an intermediate pattern of outcomes, suggestive of its intermediate status (culture could be seen as more or less inherent).

How to change the case

- Opposition to disparities might motivate intervention. But how?
- Inherent or cultural thinking might suggest that **group must change in some way**, while structural thinking might suggest **structural interventions**.

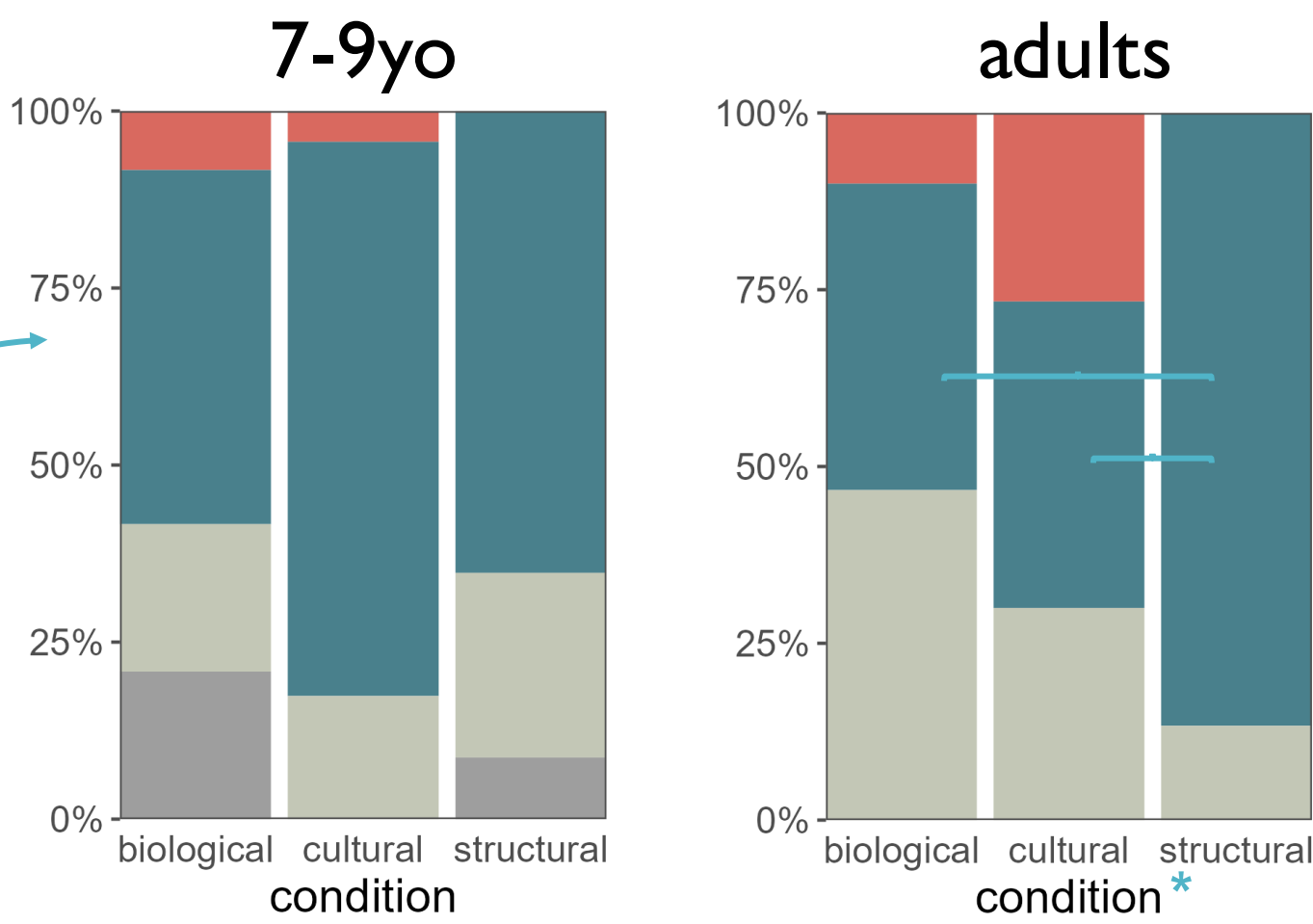
adults were more likely to suggest structural interventions

If you could make anything happen, **what would you do to have more Zarpies/get the Zarpies to work as bosses/distribution managers?**

intervention

- change group
- change structure
- other
- don't know

children gave more **structural interventions** (e.g., "make a rule to switch jobs every day") than adults → immature understanding of jobs?



Future directions

Under **what conditions** does structural reasoning leads to positive outcomes?

↑ = means with 95% bootstrap CIs
— = statistically significant difference between means (FDR-corrected)
* = statistically significant main effect of condition