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Background

- Perceiving a moral violation activates a cognitive and affective process to determine *who and how to blame* (Malle, Guglielmo, & Monroe, 2014).
- Once people make a blame judgment, they must decide whether to *publicly* express it or keep it *private*.
- Public expressions** of blame are tightly bound by social norms and *requirements of warrant* (i.e., justification).
 - Publicly over- or under-blaming carries significant social costs (e.g., loss of face, status, reactive aggression).
- Voiklis and Malle (2016) hypothesized that social factors, such as *role constraints may inhibit public* blame.
- Power, however, may reduce barriers to public blame.**
 - Past research demonstrates that feelings of power intensify approach tendencies (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003).
 - People with power are more likely to violate politeness-norms (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and to express hostility (Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, & Heerey, 2001).

Two hypotheses about Power and Judgments of Blame

- Power will intensify people's expressions of public blame relative to low power (Studies 1 & 2) or control (Study 3).
- Because they are unobservable, private blame judgments will be high and consistent across conditions (Studies 1-3).

Experimental Studies

Study 1a ($n = 170$): 3rd party moral judgments.

- MTurk participants primed with high or low power (via a writing task) made moral judgments of a person who cheated a partner during an economic game.

Study 1b ($n = 180$): 1st person blame in the workplace.

- MTurk participants made public and private blame judgments about time when a subordinate (*P-High power*) or a superior (*P-Low Power*) wronged them.

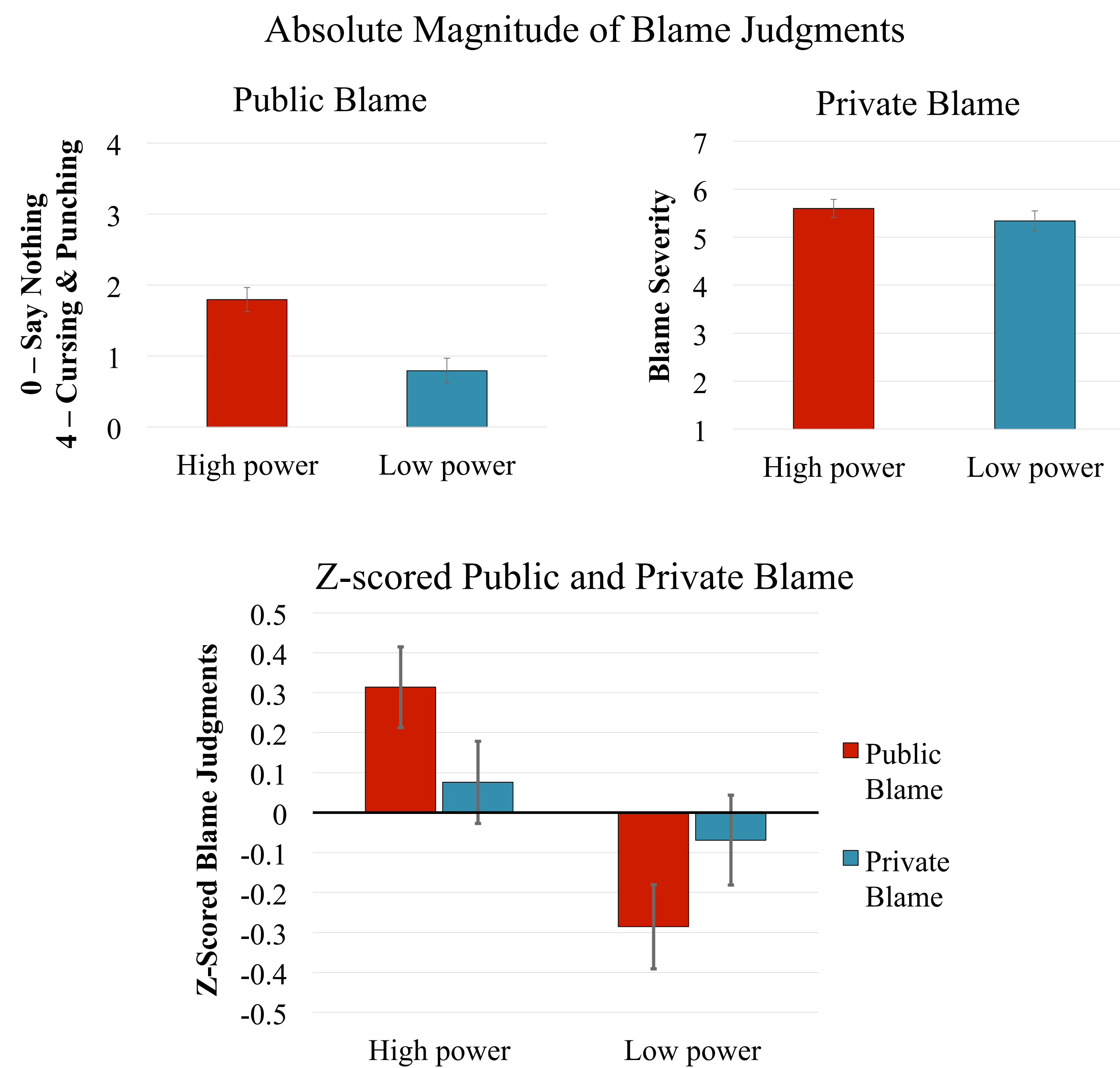
Study 2 ($n = 190$): In-lab replication of Study 1

- Added a no-power control condition

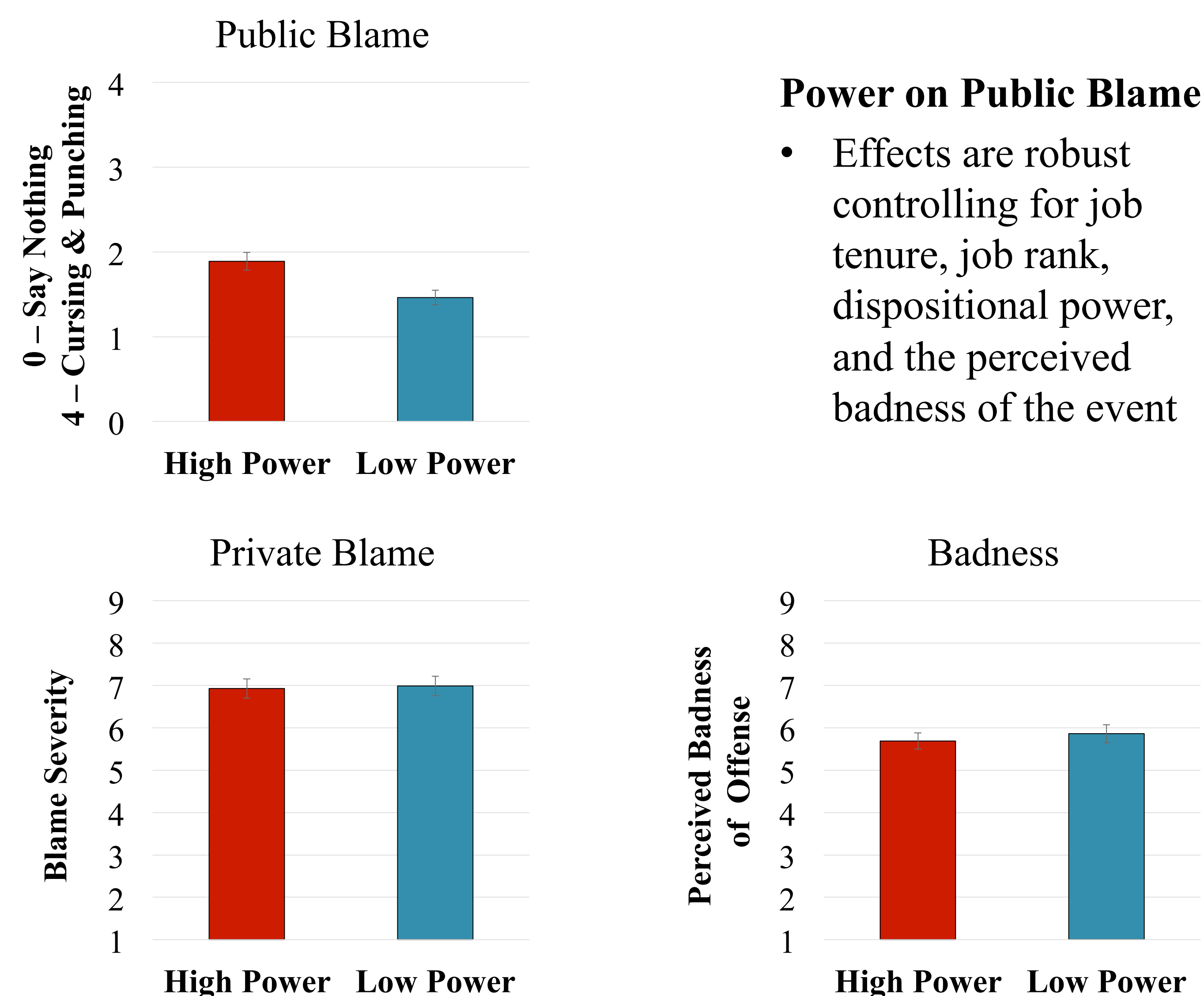
All studies measured *private blame* on a Likert scale.

All studies measured *public blame* via an open-ended question: "What would you say to [person] if you saw him face-to-face?"

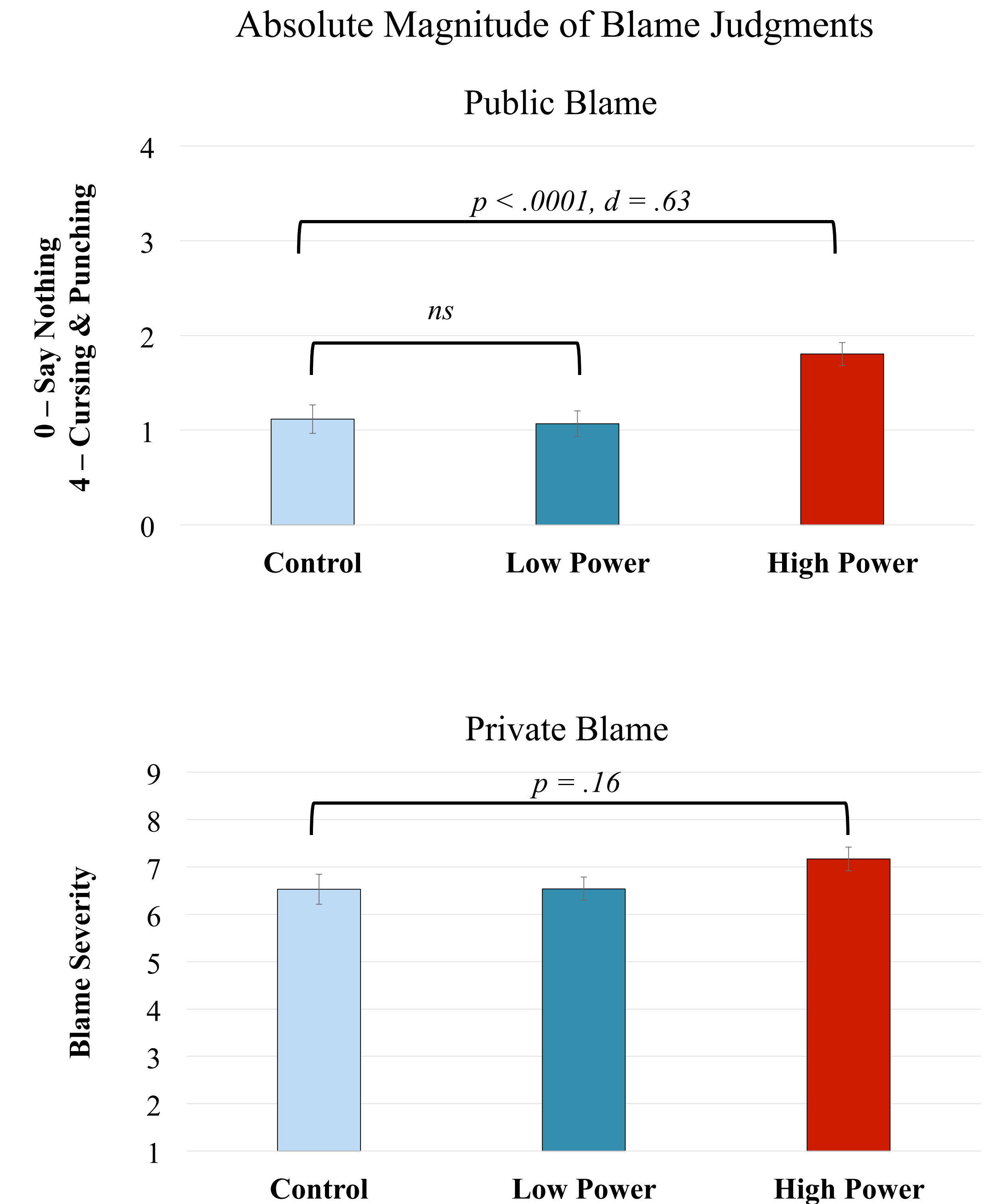
Study 1a: Blaming 3rd Parties



Study 1b: 1st Person Blaming in the Workplace



Study 2: In-lab Blame Replication



Discussion

- Power uniquely influences public judgments of blame.**
 - Power did not affect private judgments of blame, nor perceptions of event badness.
- Feeling powerful unleashes public expressions of blame.**
 - Study 3: Public blame increased only in the high-power condition; low power and control showed statistically identical amounts of public blame
- Future work to consider:**
 - Are increases in public blame explained via high-power people perceiving greater warrant for blaming?
 - Does tenuous power moderate the effects of power on public blame?