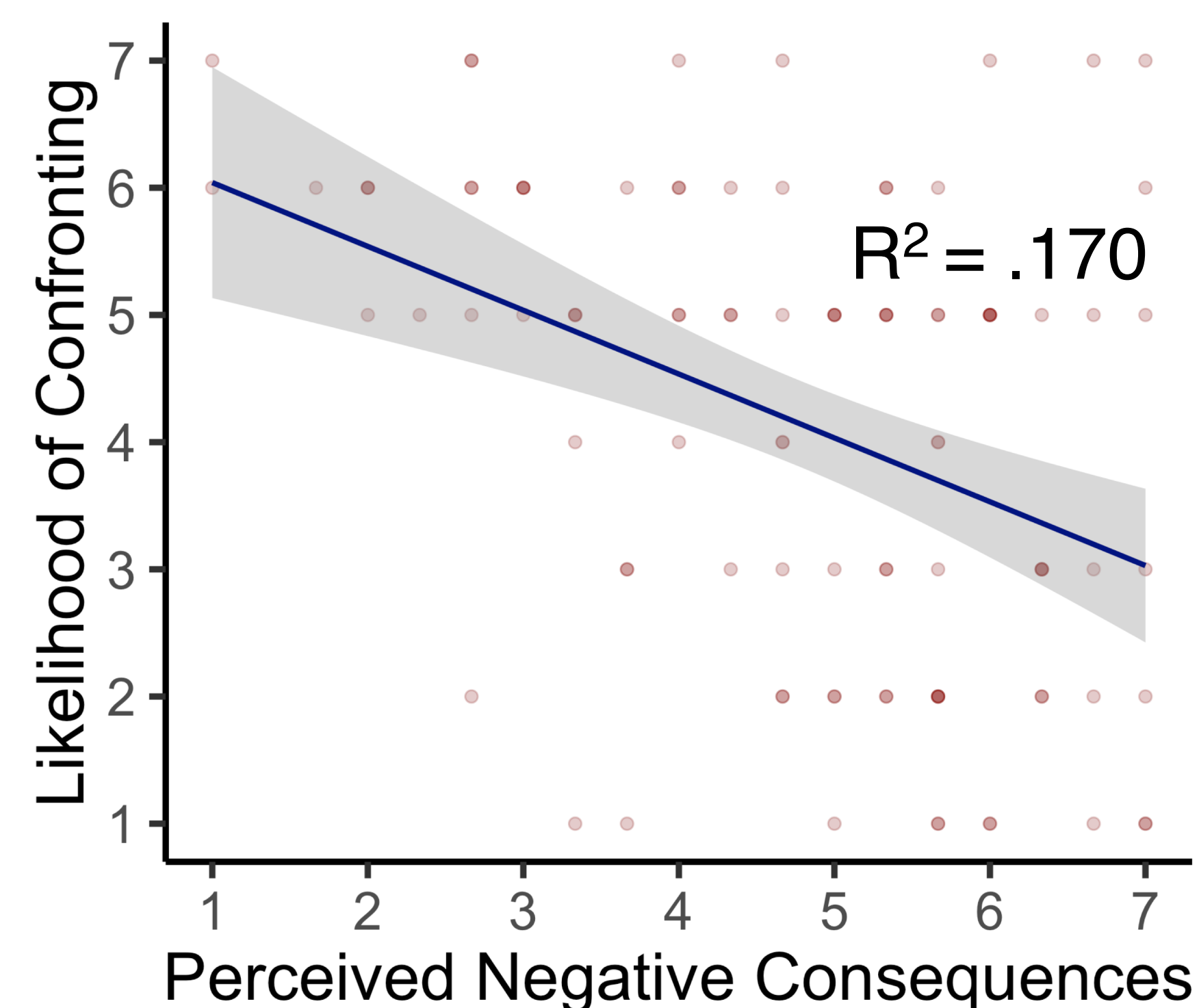


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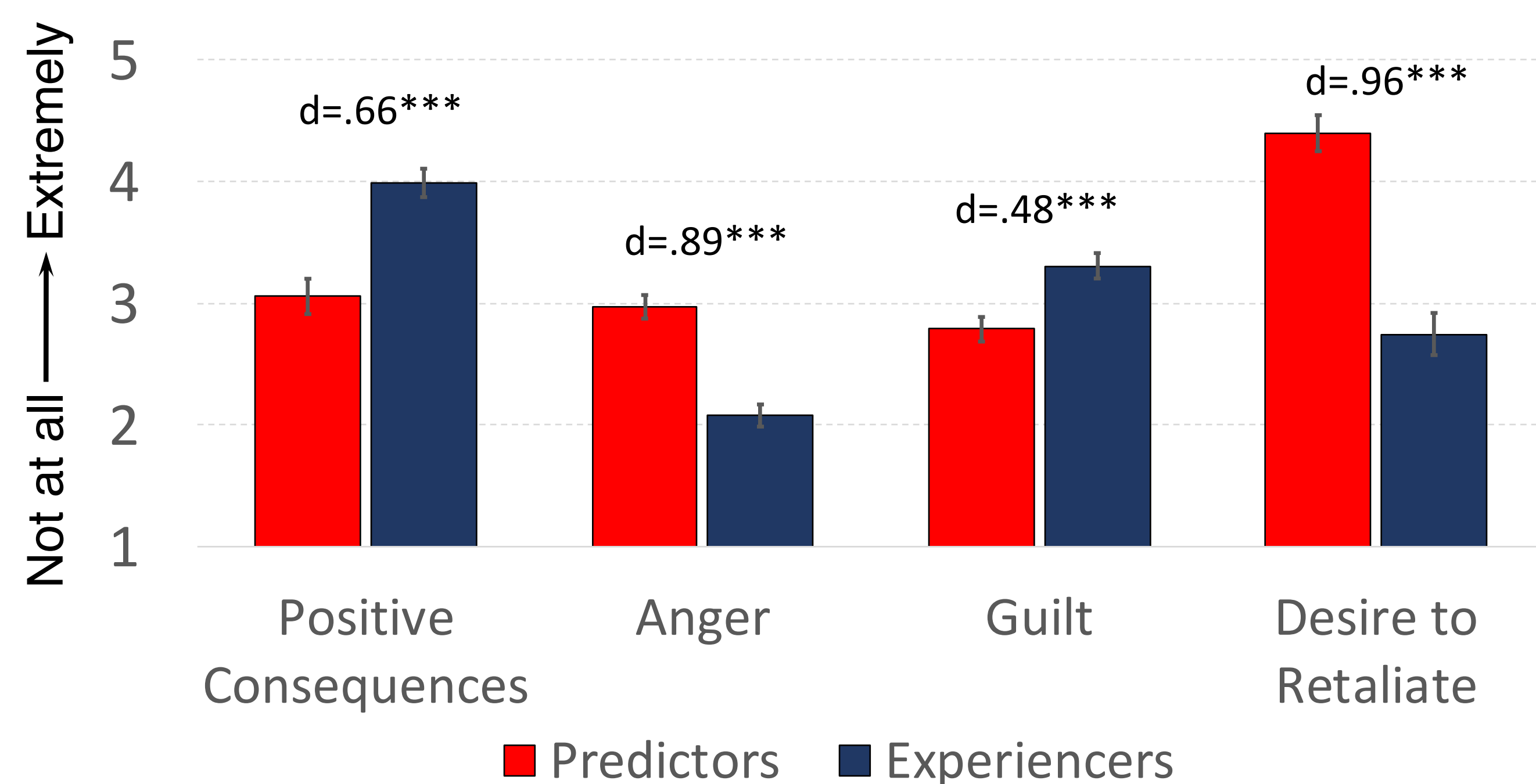
Background

- Conflict is an inevitable part of social life.
- Talking openly about issues that arise in one's relationships has many psychological and relational benefits.^{1,2,3}
- Despite this, people often avoid these conversations because they believe that confrontations have negative consequences:



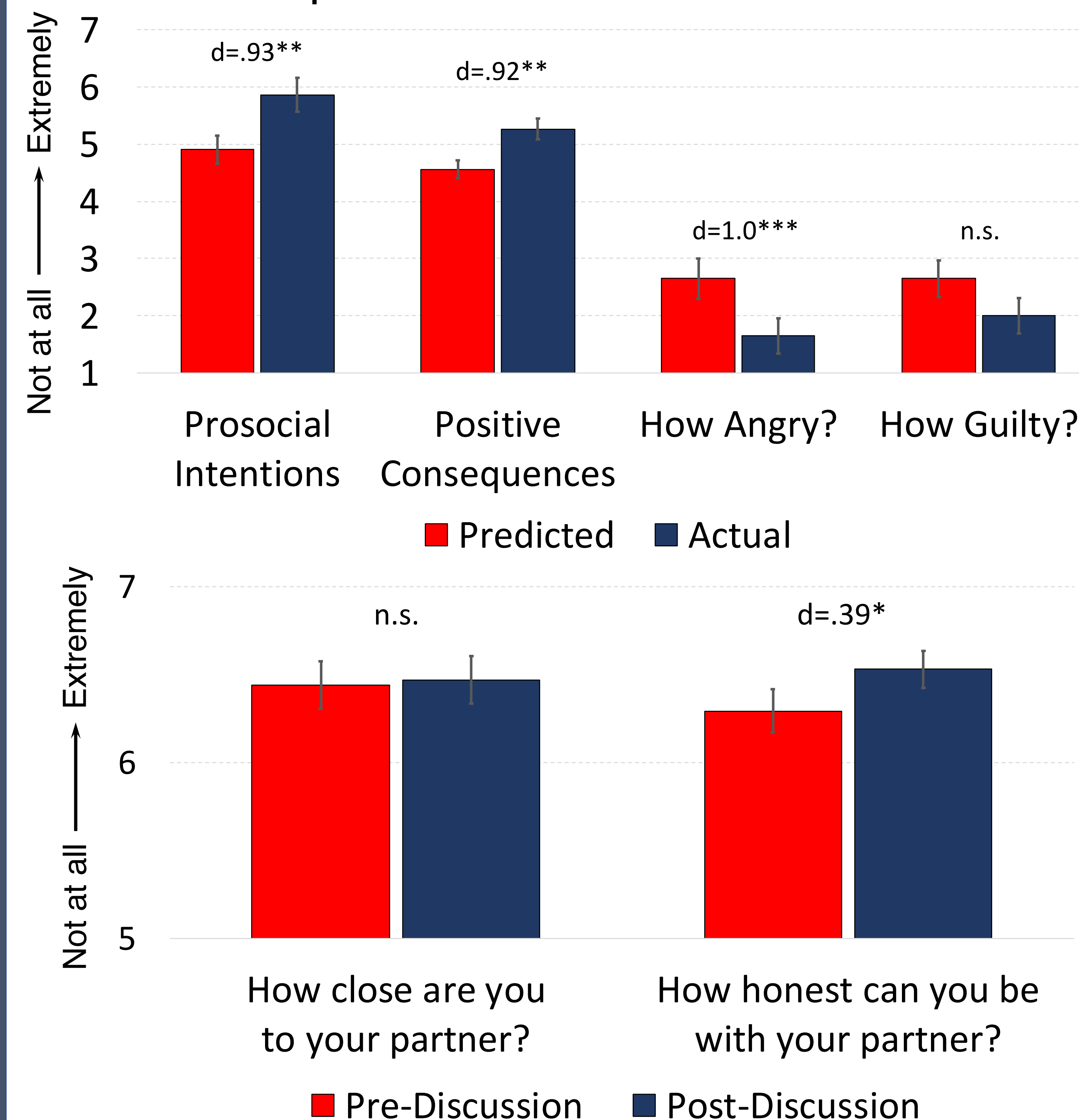
Overestimating Neg. Consequences

- Experiencers reported their past experience of being confronted about an issue.
- Predictors rated how someone would react when confronted about that same issue.



Confrontation is Better Than Expected

- Roommates & romantic partners predicted reactions to discussing an unresolved issue
- After the discussion, they reported their actual experience of the confrontation

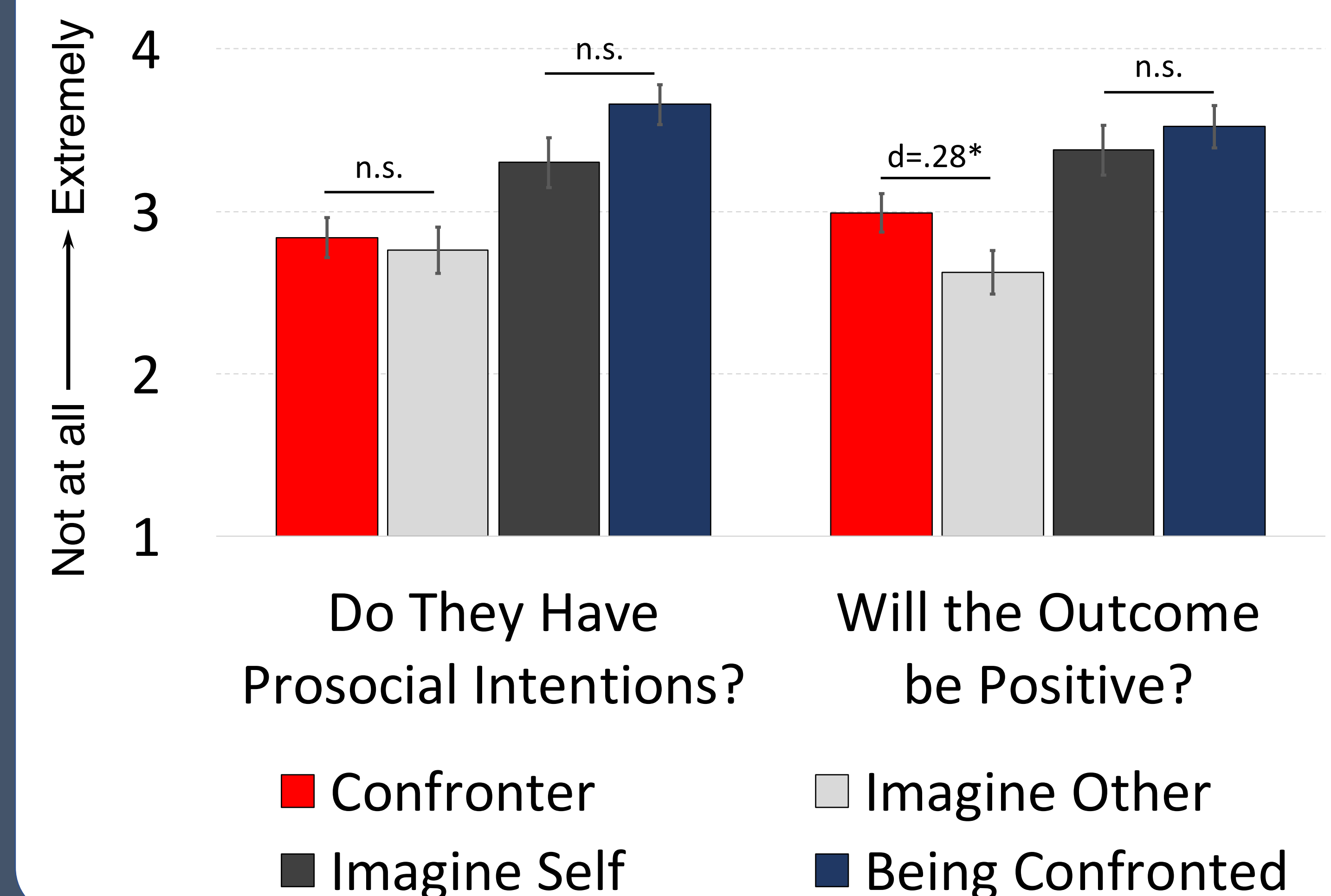


Mechanism Behind Neg. Expectations

	Ability to Communicate	Prosocial Intentions	Negative Consequences	Likelihood of Confronting
Seriousness of the Issue	-0.044	-0.155*	-0.097	0.111
Ability to Communicate		0.170*	0.128	0.453***
Prosocial Intentions			0.800***	0.289***
Negative Consequences				0.335***

Manipulating Mechanism

- If the belief that people lack prosocial intentions causes negative expectations, then focusing on that belief should make predictions worse, while focusing on one's own prosocial intentions should make predictions better.



Conclusion

- People systematically **overestimate** how badly confrontations will go because they **underestimate** the extent to which the people they are confronting have prosocial intentions (e.g., will be sympathetic or understanding of their feelings).
- These results suggest that when issues arise in a relationship, recognizing people's prosocial nature may lead to more open and beneficial conversations.

1. Birditt, K. S., Nevitt, M. R., & Almeida, D. M. (2015). Daily interpersonal coping strategies: Implications for self-reported well-being and cortisol. *Journal of social and personal relationships*, 32(5), 687-706.

2. Overall, N. C., Fletcher, G. J., Simpson, J. A., & Sibley, C. G. (2009). Regulating partners in intimate relationships: The costs and benefits of different communication strategies. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 96(3), 620.

3. Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2000). The timing of divorce: Predicting when a couple will divorce over a 14-year period. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 737-745.