

# Not Knowing How to Know: Adults Underestimate the Efficacy of Getting Perspective

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## INTRODUCTION

- Understanding the minds of others is one of the most complicated tasks any person undertakes.
- Existing research indicates that people may fail to recognize which strategies lead to more versus less understanding.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Directly questioning another person about their thoughts or attitudes can yield accurate insight, yet people seem to underestimate the value of getting another person's perspective directly.<sup>1</sup>
- We tested the robustness of people's failure to appreciate the value of getting perspective across three experiments, among both familiar and unfamiliar partners.

## METHOD

### Overview of Experiments

- Predictors were assigned to one of three conditions: All, Choice, or Control. Predictors in the **All condition** discussed each item with their partner directly (Exp 1) or watched their partner discuss each item via video recording (Exp 2 & Exp 3). Predictors in the **Choice condition** selected which items they would like to directly discuss with (Exp 1) or view their partner discussing (Exp 2 & Exp 3). Predictors in the **Control condition** received no additional information from their partner.

## METHOD

- Across experiments, predictors estimated the degree to which their partner reported dis/liking (Exp 1), dis/agreeing (Exp 2), opposing/supporting (Exp 3) a series of activities (Exp 1) or statements (Exp 2 & Exp 3) on a 7-point scale (e.g., 1 = *dislike very much*; 7 = *like very much*). Predictors then rated their confidence in their predictions on an 11-point scale (i.e., 0 = *not at all confident*; 10 = *extremely confident*).

**Table 1.** Number of predictors per condition per experiment as well as number of items predicted, topic, and whether the predictor and target knew each other.

Exp	All	Choice	All	Items	Topic	Pair
1	30	30	30	15	Activities	Friends
2	35	29	32	20	Opinions	Strangers
3	35	35	35	6	Politics	Strangers

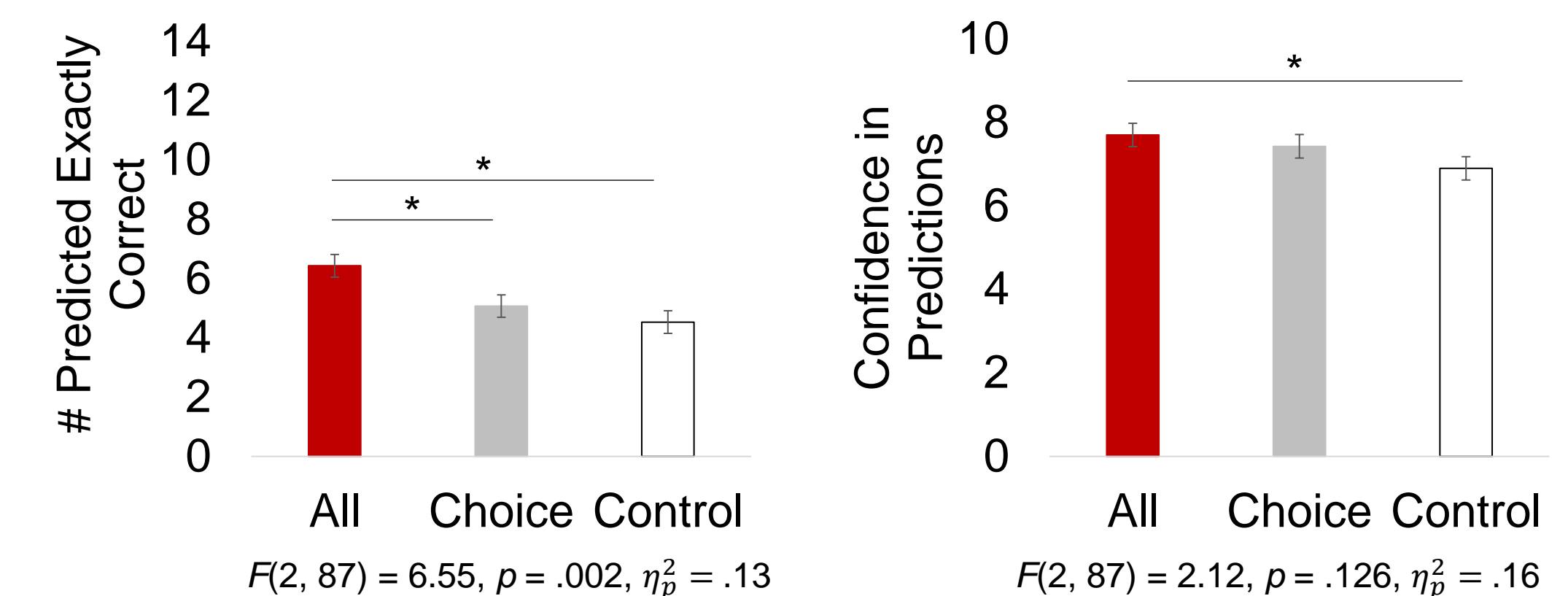
## DISCUSSION

- Failing to appreciate the value of getting perspective is pervasive, spanning different types of relationships (friends, strangers) and topics (activities, everyday opinions, politics).
- At the same time, those given the choice to get perspective did ask some questions of their target, but not enough to maximize accuracy.
- Several psychological barriers may keep people from getting perspective, including overconfidence in one's own judgment, distrusting others' responses, and fears of seeming intrusive.

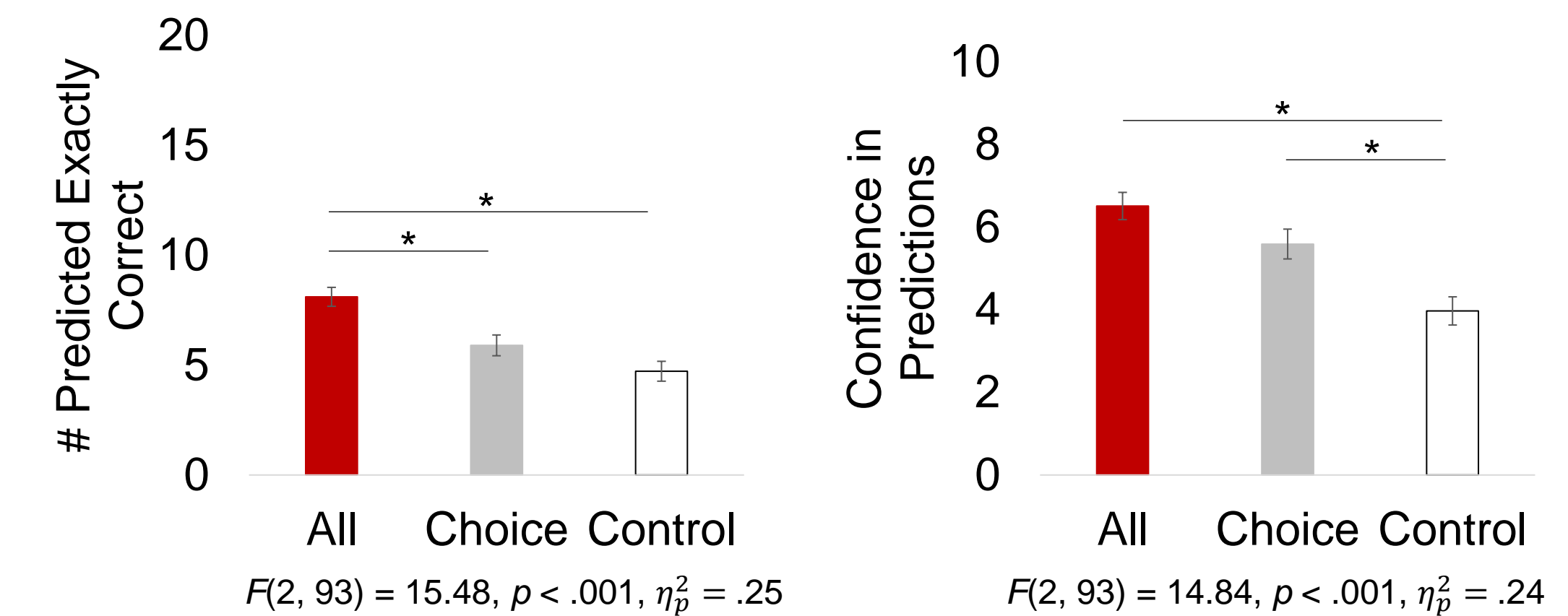
## RESULTS

Mean accuracy levels (# predicted exactly correct; left) and mean confidence ratings (right) for each experiment.

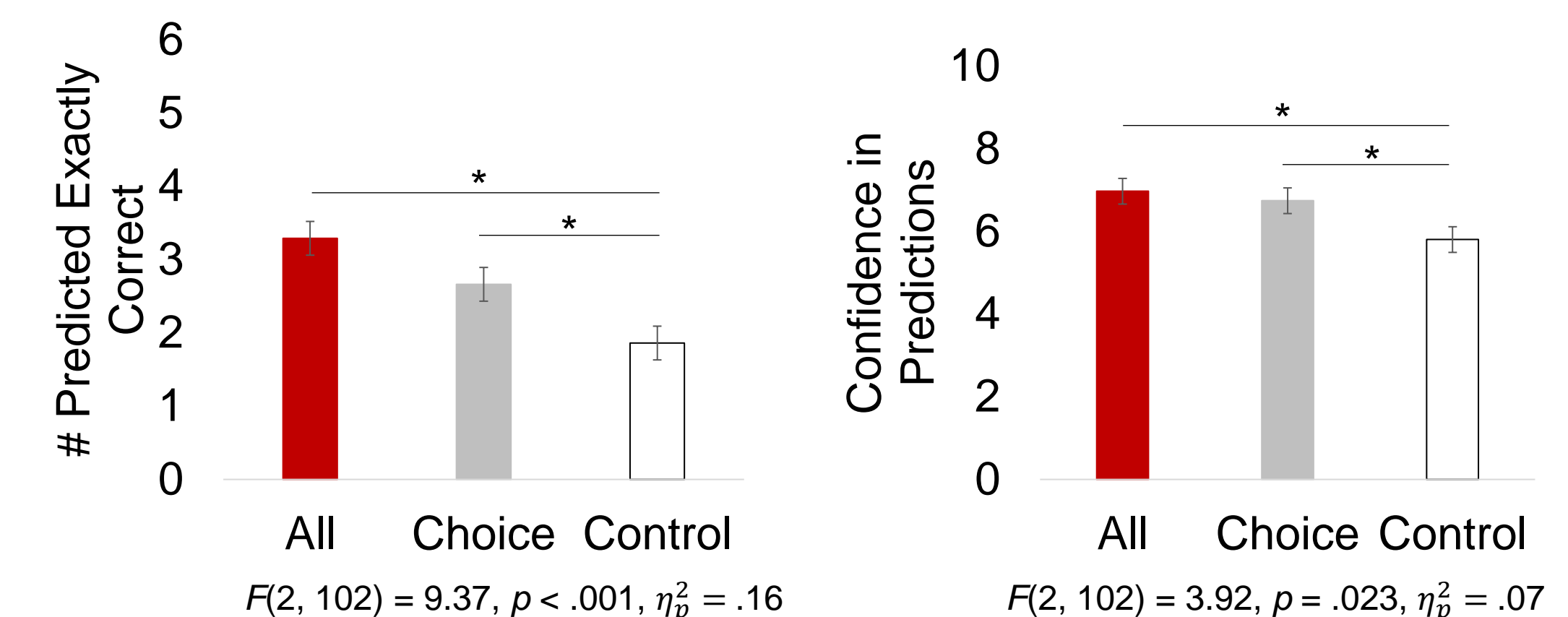
### Experiment 1: Activities Questionnaire<sup>3</sup> (Friends)



### Experiment 2: Everyday Opinions<sup>4</sup> (Strangers)



### Experiment 3: Political Statements (Strangers)



**References:**  
 [1] Eyal, T., Steffel, M., & Epley, N. (2018). Perspective mistaking: Accurately understanding the mind of another requires getting perspective, not taking perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 114(4), 547-571.  
 [2] Zhou, H., Majka, E. A., & Epley, N. (2017). Inferring perspective versus getting perspective: Underestimating the value of being in another person's shoes. *Psychological Science*, 28(4), 482-493.  
 [3] Swann, W. B., Jr., & Gill, M. J. (1997). Confidence and accuracy in person perception: Do we know what we think we know about our relationship partners? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(4), 747-757.  
 [4] Hoch, S. J. (1987). Perceived consensus and predictive accuracy: The pros and cons of projection. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53(2), 221-234.

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