

The Mistaken Preference for Overclaiming Credit in Groups

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SJDM Meeting Link: <https://berkeley.zoom.us/j/96333999107>

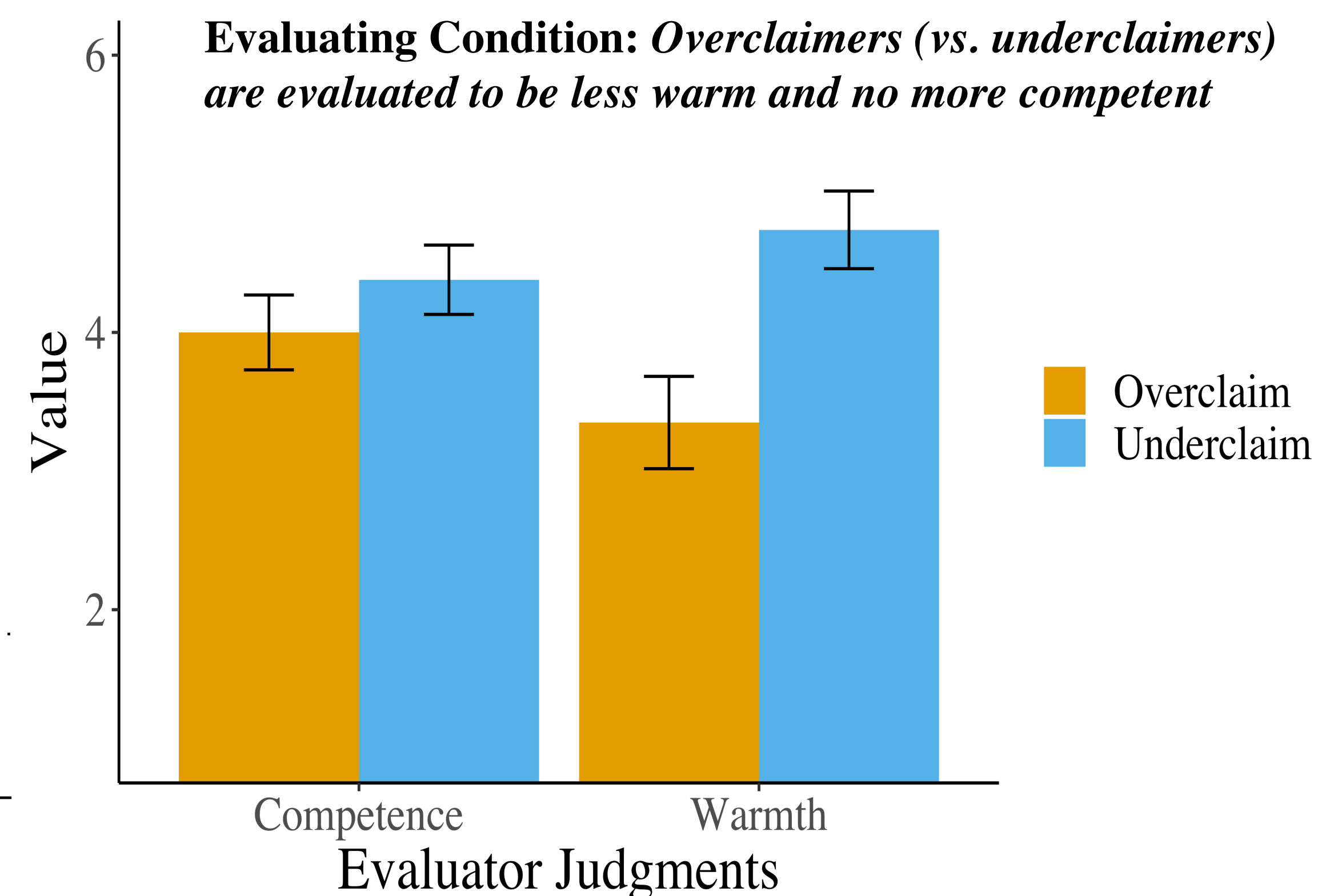
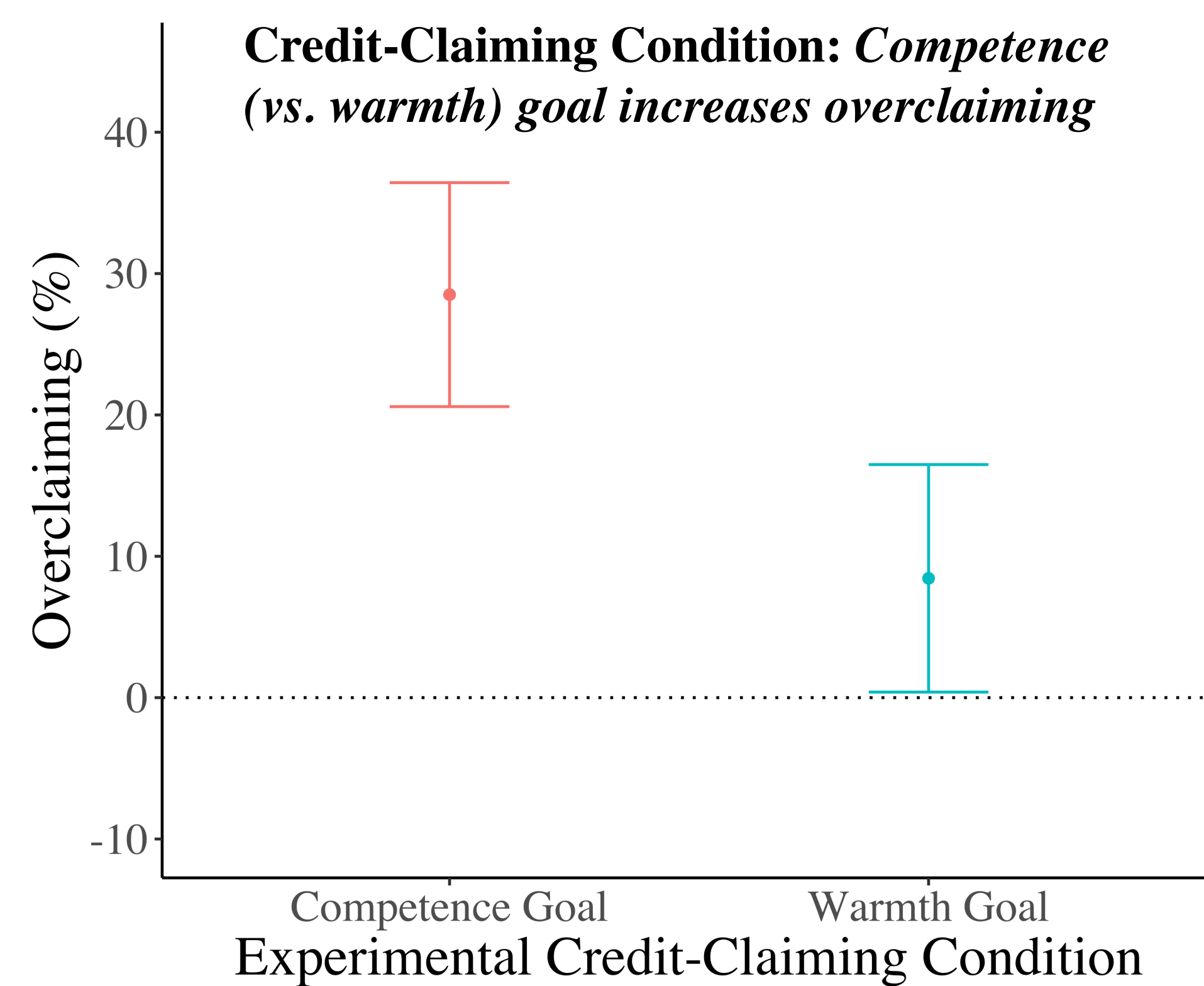


1 Introduction

People sometimes take more credit than they are due when working toward shared outcomes in groups (i.e., “overclaiming credit”; Ross & Sicoly, 1979). Nine experiments ($N = 3,395$) examine **why people inaccurately claim credit and how their credit claims influence others’ impressions of them**. Our results show that people overclaim credit to appear more competent (vs. warm), but group members perceive overclaimers as less warm and no more competent than underclaimers. These findings suggest that **overclaiming credit is a mistaken impression management strategy** in work groups.

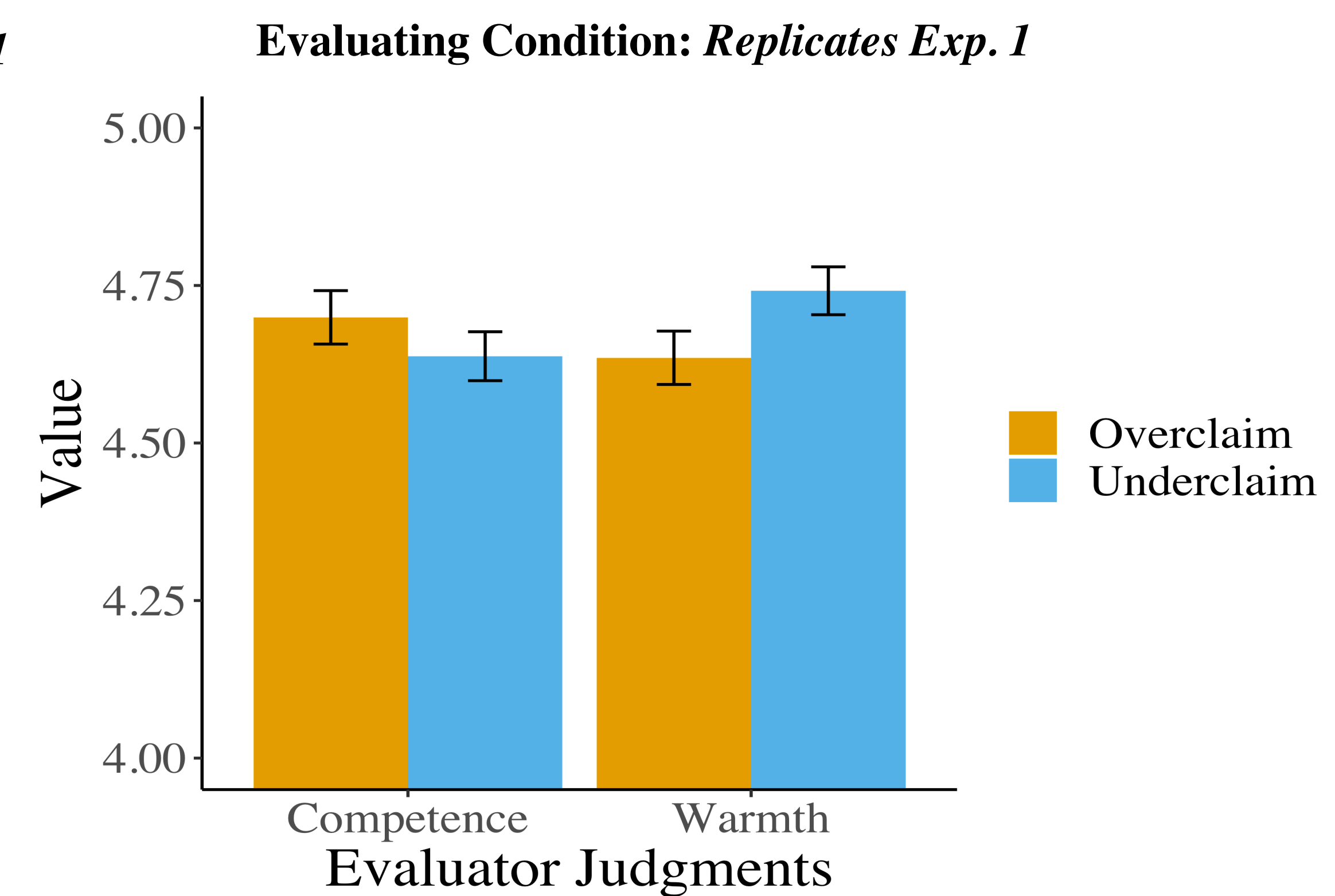
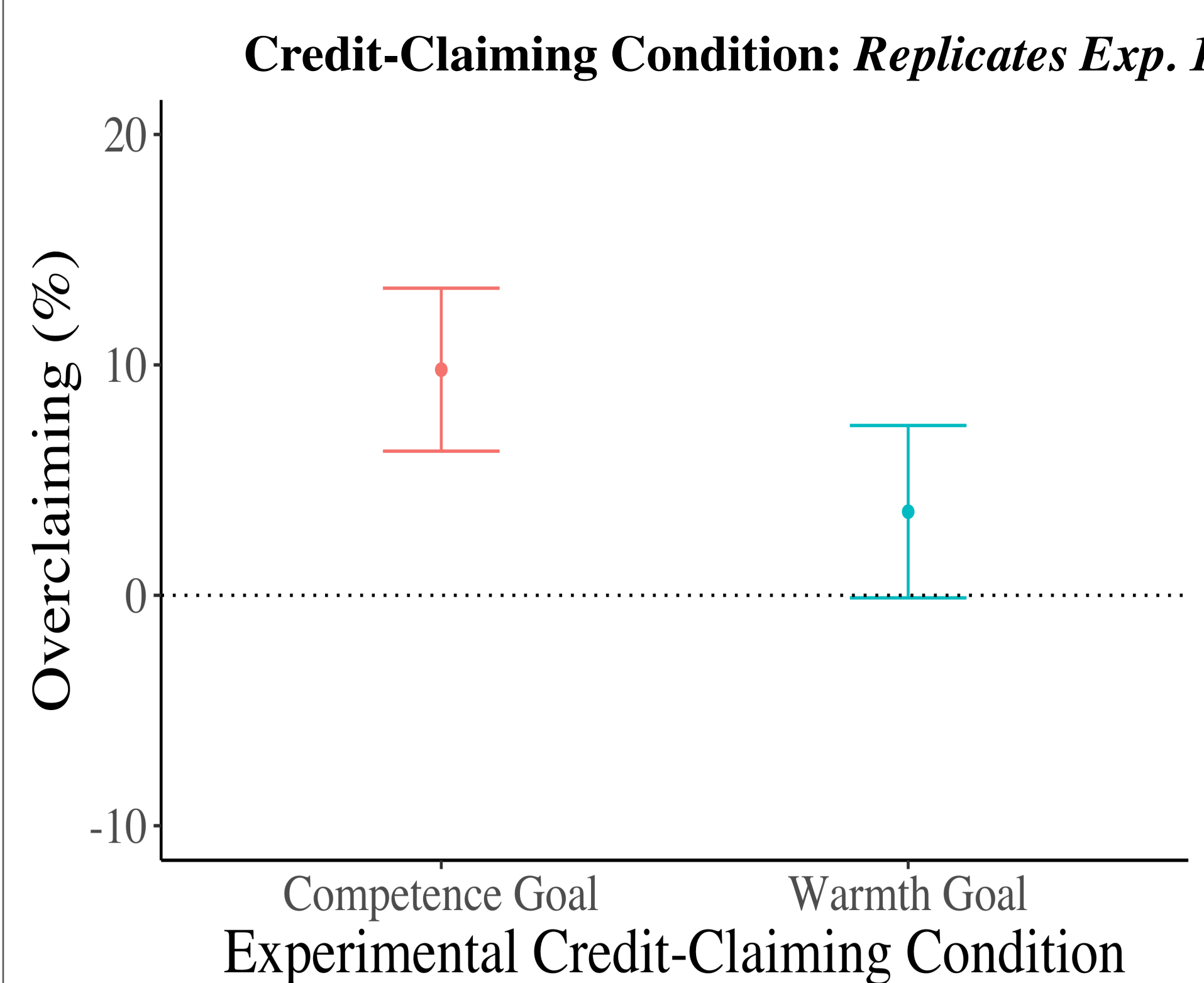
2 Experiment 1: Work Team Vignette

- Design (Between-subjects):** “Credit-claiming” or “Evaluating” condition ($N=202$)
- Additional Credit-Claiming IV (Within-subjects):** Get teammates to “think you are smart” (competence goal condition) and “like you” (warmth goal condition)
- Credit-Claiming DVs:** Claimed contribution to the group, compared to what they actually believed they did (i.e., “overclaiming”)
- Additional Evaluating IV (Within-subjects):** One of your teammates reported that they did “more work than what you think they did” (overclaim condition) and “less work than what you think they did” (underclaim condition)
- Evaluating DVs:** Perceived competence and warmth



3 Experiment 2: Cooperative Story-Writing Exercise

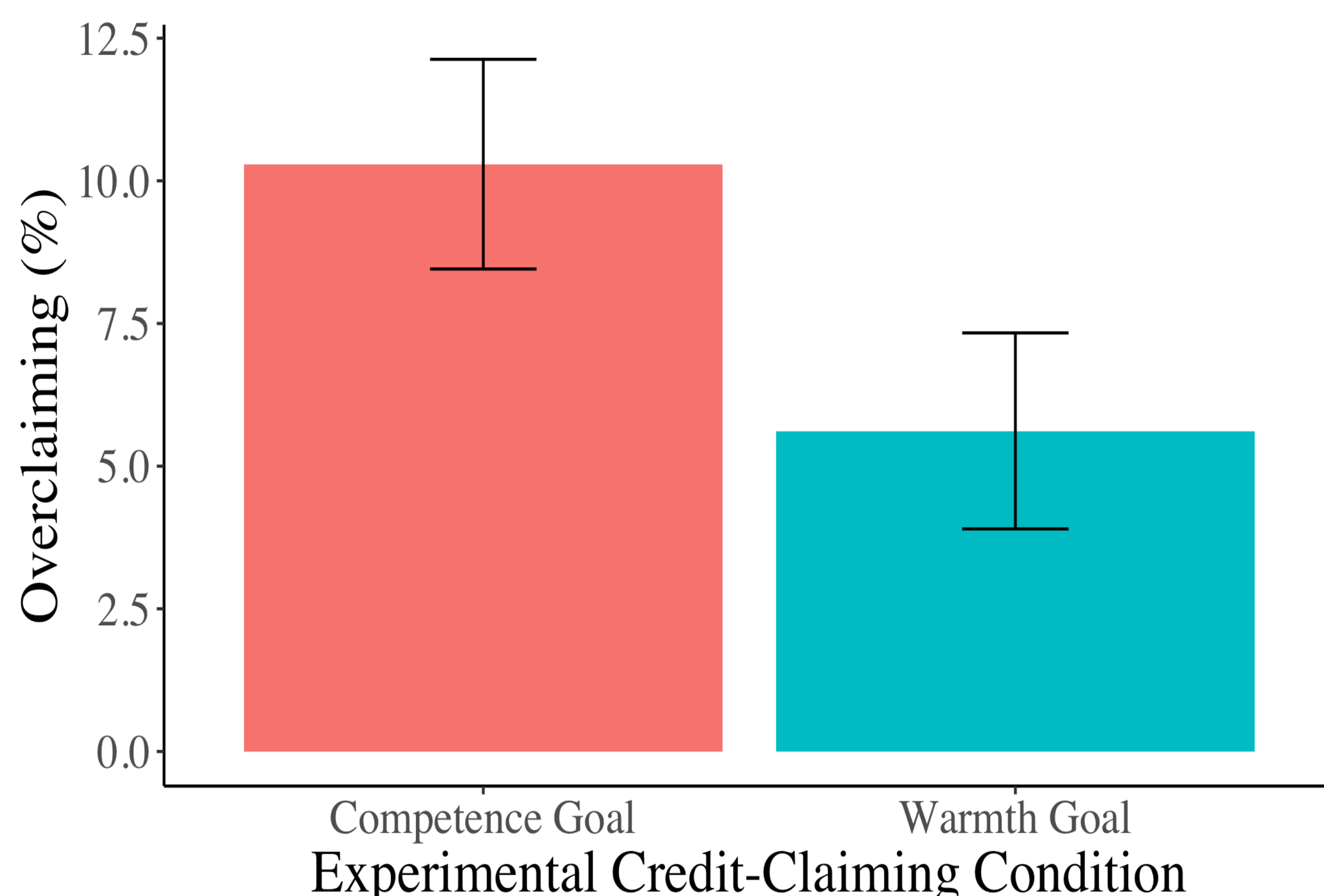
- Phase 1 (Credit-Claiming) Design:** Writers ($N=58$) work in dyads to complete a novel story-writing task that required 50% contribution from each member (alternating sentences)
- Phase 1 (Credit-Claiming) DVs:** Contribution claims to appear “smart and hard-working” (competent) and “get others to like you” (warmth)
- Phase 2 (Evaluating) Design:** New sample of evaluators ($N=870$) read work product (i.e., stories) and learn the writer has overclaimed and underclaimed (within-subjects design)
- Phase 2 (Evaluating) DVs:** Perceived competence and warmth



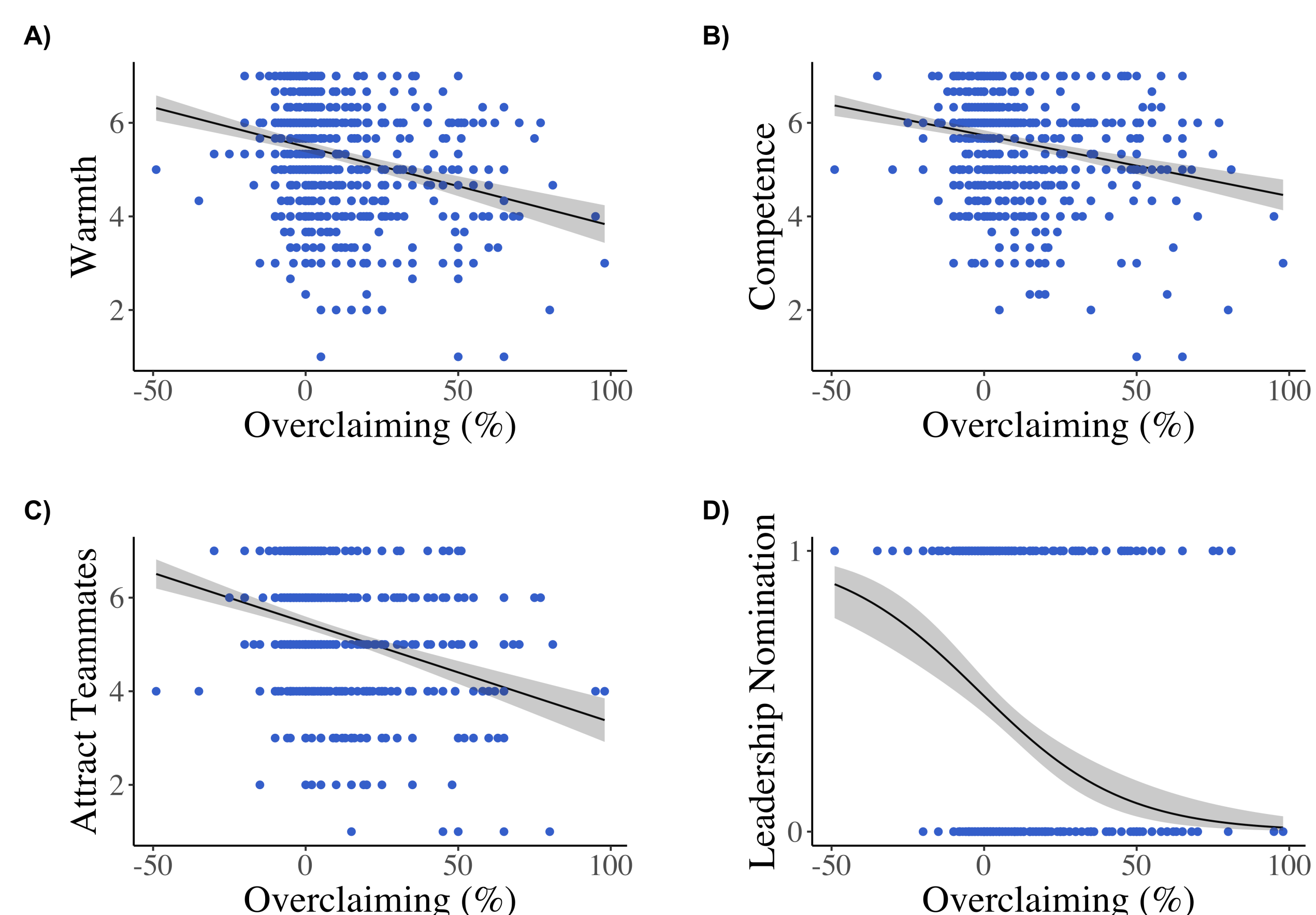
4 Experiment 3: Working Groups

Design: Group members ($N=264$) completed a hidden profile task together, reported their contributions to their group when trying to be competent and warm, and then evaluated each group member after learning about that member’s contribution claims.

Credit-Claiming Condition: Replicates Exps. 1 and 2



Evaluating Condition: Replicating and extending Exps. 1-2, overclaiming (vs. underclaiming) reduces perceptions of warmth and competence and makes the overclaimer less desirable as a collaborator in future and less likely to be nominated as a leader



5 Conclusion

Our results indicate that **group members overestimated how much overclaiming (vs. underclaiming) credit for a collaborative task would make them appear competent and failed to recognize how much overclaiming would reduce their warmth**. Given the prevalence of work in groups across many settings, we offer a more comprehensive understanding of the interpersonal consequences of different types of credit-claiming behavior in groups (e.g., Caruso et al., 2006). Our findings add to a growing body of work on how people mismanage impressions (e.g., Steinmetz et al., 2017). Finally, this research has practical implications: **before overclaiming credit for a group outcome, recognize that others may dislike you as a result.**