

EFFECTS OF PRESTIGE AND CREDs ON INTERGROUP AGGRESSION

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INTRODUCTION

- The prevalent models of the transmission of intergroup aggression are of the **dominant individuals who coerce others into aggressive behaviors** (which humans would otherwise try to avoid) and of dominant leaders being **necessary** (and thus preferred) **in the moments of crises** (as only their decisiveness can achieve what is needed for the good of the group).
- However, such models leave out other ways open for cultural species. **Guided by cultural evolutionary models of intergroup competition, we set out to test the role of two learning biases – prestige bias and CREDs**, two unlikely candidates for motivating the spread of intergroup violence due to their prevalent connection to “harmless” outcomes.
- Hypothesizing that **under special circumstances** (when arising intergroup hostilities create the demand for aggressive action against the enemy group), **human psychology would use these mechanisms to reroute the perception of such aggression from coercive and disdainful to valued and justified**, opening the door for a voluntary participation in intergroup aggression.

METHODS

STUDY I

- laboratory experiment

Participants

- student population in Czech Republic ($n = 126$)

Independent variable

- using **minimal group paradigm** and an **intergroup prisoner's dilemma with maximized differences** (Halevy et al., 2008), we utilized the enemy identity (Neo-Nazis), the impression of being under attack, and loosing to create a sense of conflict where aggressive action is desirable
 - CRED** (team leader investing all their money supporting their call for a counterattack)
 - no CRED** (team leader investing none of their money)

Dependent variable

- a chance to **follow the investment, choose a different investment or no investment**
- prestige and dominance questionnaire** targeted at the leader (Cheng et al., 2010)

STUDY II

- natural experiment/on-line survey (Prolific)

Participants

- general US population ($n = 201$)

Independent variable

- using the **US Capitol storming** for studying dynamics of intergroup conflicts
- supporting** the storming (eight randomized items e.g., “I believe that the 2020 Presidential election results were accurate”, “I believe that the people involved in the Capitol storming were patriots”)
- not supporting** the storming

Dependent variable

- perception of **prestige** and **dominance** targeted at Ashli E. Babbitt and the Capitol Police officer who fatally shot her

LEARNING BIASES

PRESTIGE BIAS

Dominant individuals compete aggressively for their rank and coerce subordinates to defer to them under the threat of inflicting costs. Phylogenetically younger status pathway - prestige - is based on freely conferred deference for access to cultural models. Prestigious individuals are valued for their competence and liked by other members of their group (Henrich, 2016).

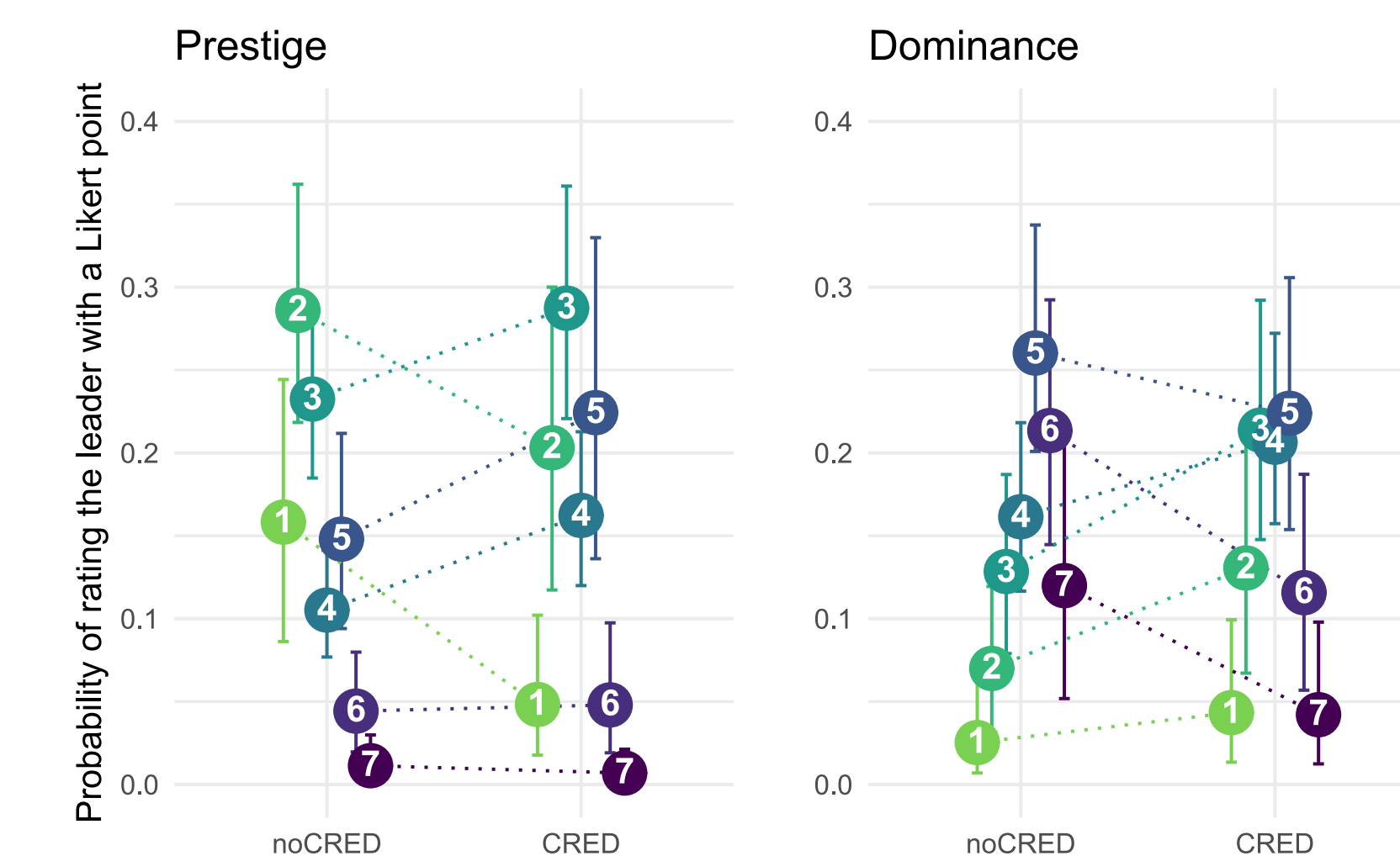
CREDs

High social rank manipulators can cheaply exploit naïve learners by verbally deceiving them. Addressing this pressure, a learning bias has evolved that is sensitive to the congruence between words and deeds. Before adopting ideas and behavioral patterns, humans observe whether others validate their claims by credibility enhancing displays (CREDs), i.e., behavioral displays that only those who truly believe what they are saying would perform (Henrich, 2009).



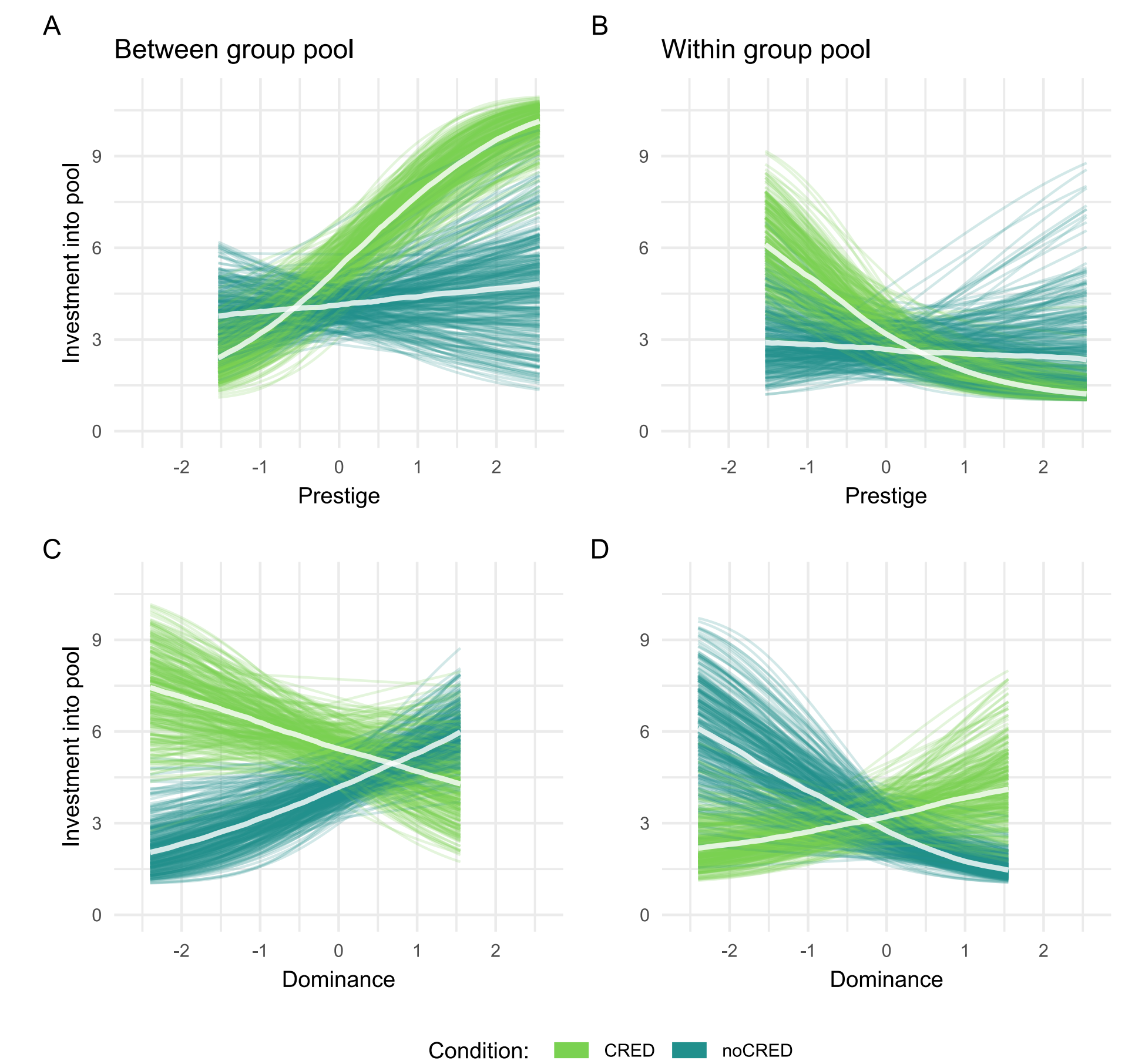
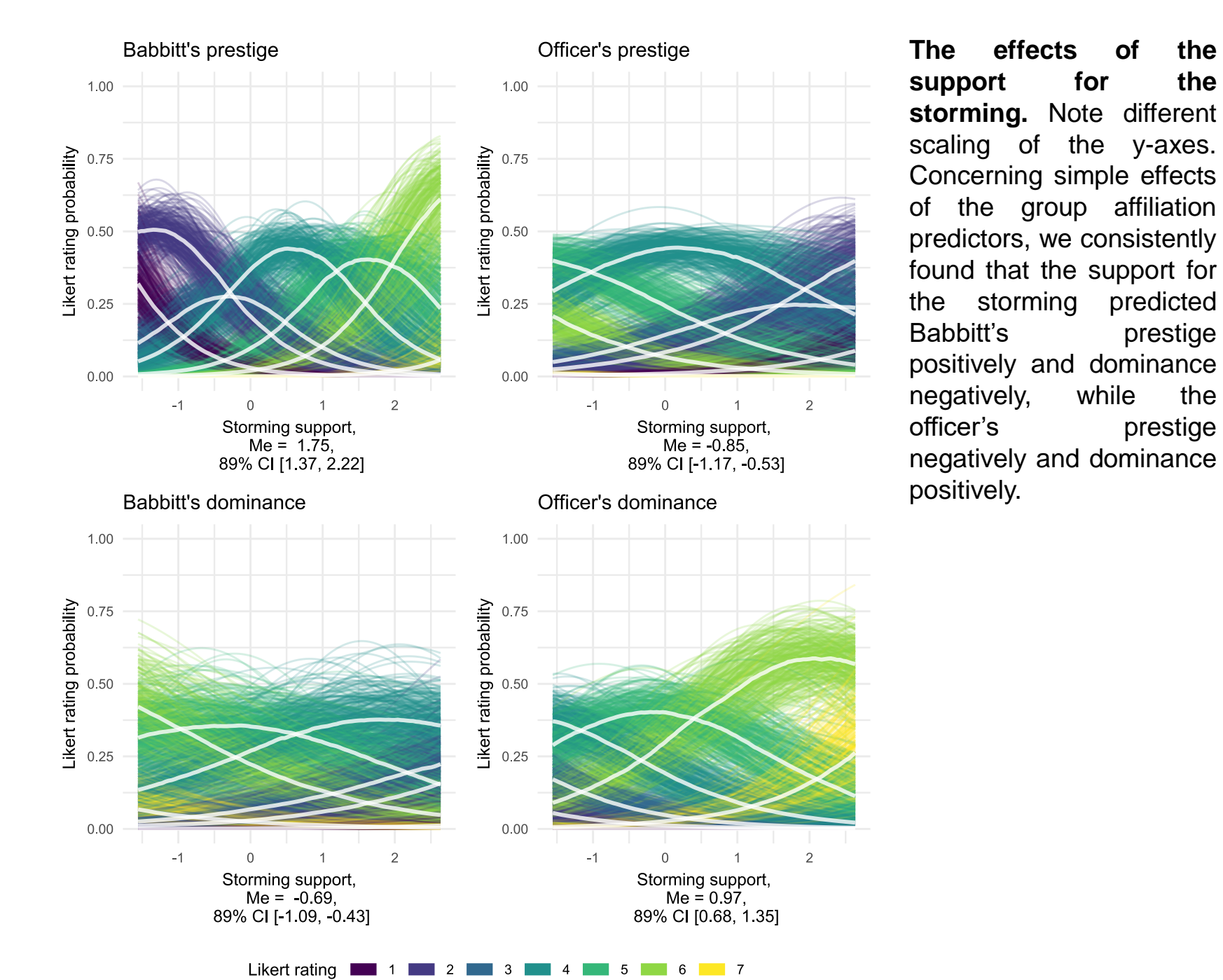
RESULTS

STUDY I



CREDs differentially predict prestige and dominance of leaders instigating intergroup aggression. On centered 1–7 Likert scales (1 – strongly disagree, 4 – neutral, 7 – strongly agree), leaders who supported their call for an attack with a CRED had higher chances of being rated as prestigious, i.e., with the above the average Likert points. CREDs also decreased the chances of rating leaders as dominant.

STUDY II



CONCLUSIONS

- The **transmission of intergroup aggression increases with CREDs** that support proclamations calling for aggression.
- This trend is **not predicted by coercive dominance but by the prestige** of individuals calling for aggression, suggesting that such behavior is valued, considered trustworthy and appropriate.
- Implicating prestige has consequences because prestigious individuals have higher chances of transmitting their behavior to others (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001; Jiménez & Mesoudi, 2019).
- Refining the discussion on the preference for dominant leaders during crises, we show that **in-groups do not perceive leaders who act dominantly against out-groups as dominant but prestigious**.
- With others (Jiménez, Flitton & Mesoudi, 2021), we caution against explaining leadership solely via theories of social dominance, conflating prestige with the inability to act decisively.

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