

The Relationship Between Emotion Regulation and Self-Verification

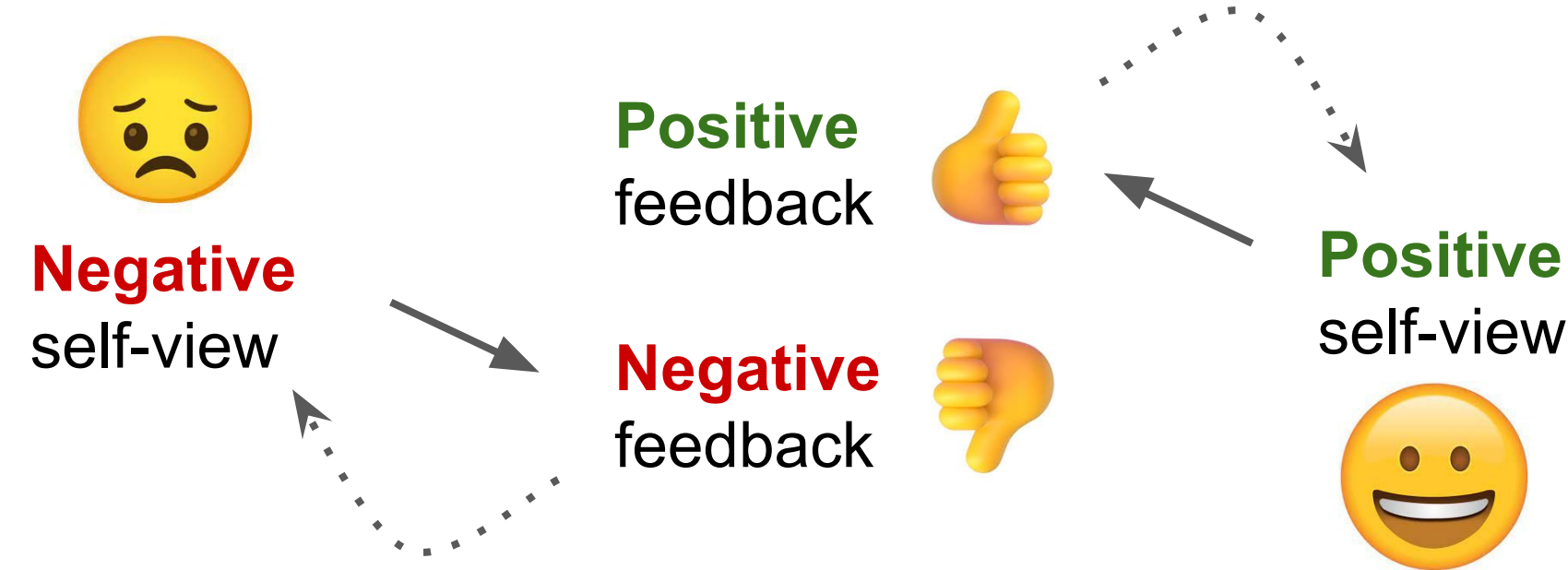
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Introduction

Self-verification (SV) refers to a preference for feedback that is consistent with existing self-views (Swann & Read, 1991). SV reinforces existing beliefs about the self:

- SV of negative beliefs has been linked to affective disorders such as depression (Swann et al., 1992).
- However, SV can reinforce positive beliefs and improve self-esteem (North & Swann, 2009).



Why do people self-verify?

- SV may have adaptive regulatory function to **maintain coherent, stable self-view** (Swann & Buhrmester, 2011) or to **avoid distress caused by disconfirming feedback** that challenges self-views (Swann & Read, 1981).
- Most recent literature has primarily focused on its negative impact among people with negative self-views, leaving it **unclear how self-verification contributes to the promotion of positive emotion and self-esteem**.
- As SV has been shown to relate to affective disorders and is believed to contribute to self-esteem, it may also relate to **emotion regulation (ER) strategies**. However, the relationship between ER strategies and SV has not yet been directly investigated.

RQ: Is self-verification associated with habitual emotion regulation strategies?

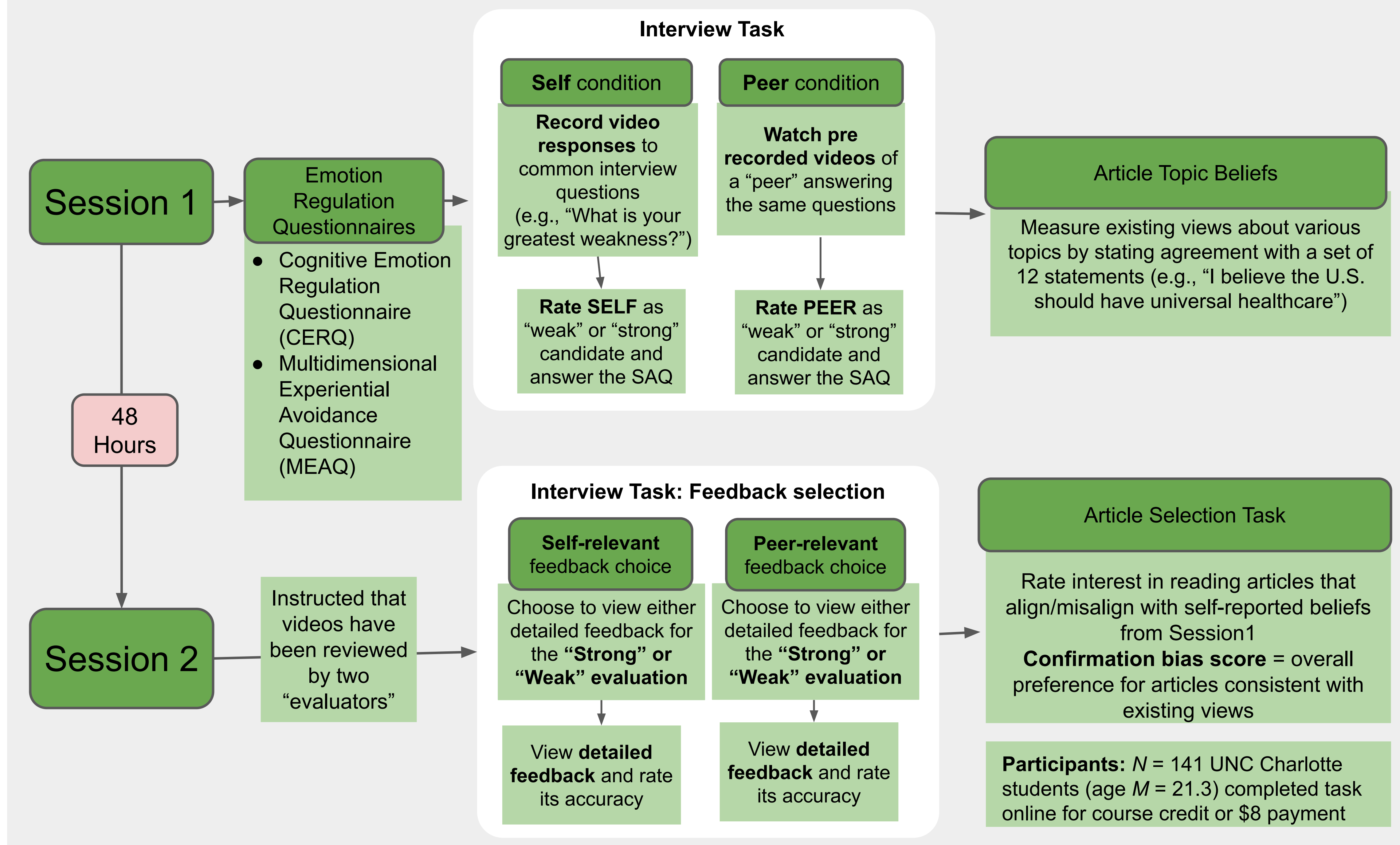
Current Study

- Designed a **simulated interview task** to assess preference for confirmatory feedback about the self
- Included two measures for SV: Choice of feedback (Giesler et al., 1996) and accuracy ratings (Szumowska et al., 2022)
- Self-reported survey questions to assess habitual ER strategy use

H1a: Self-verification of negative information will relate negatively with the use of the emotion regulation strategies of acceptance, problem solving, and reappraisal.

H1b: Self-verification of negative information will relate positively with rumination and avoidance.

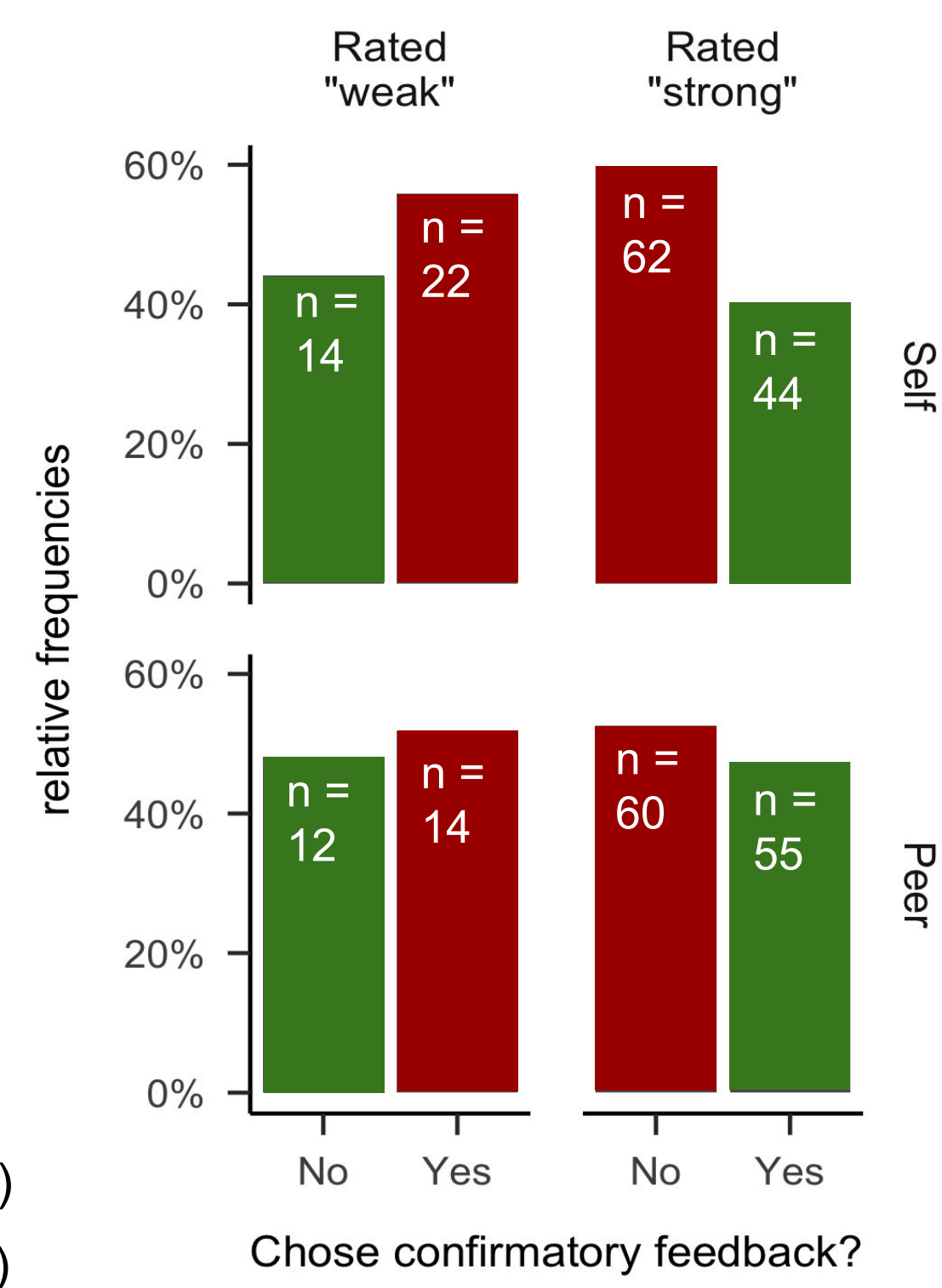
Design



Did participants self-verify?

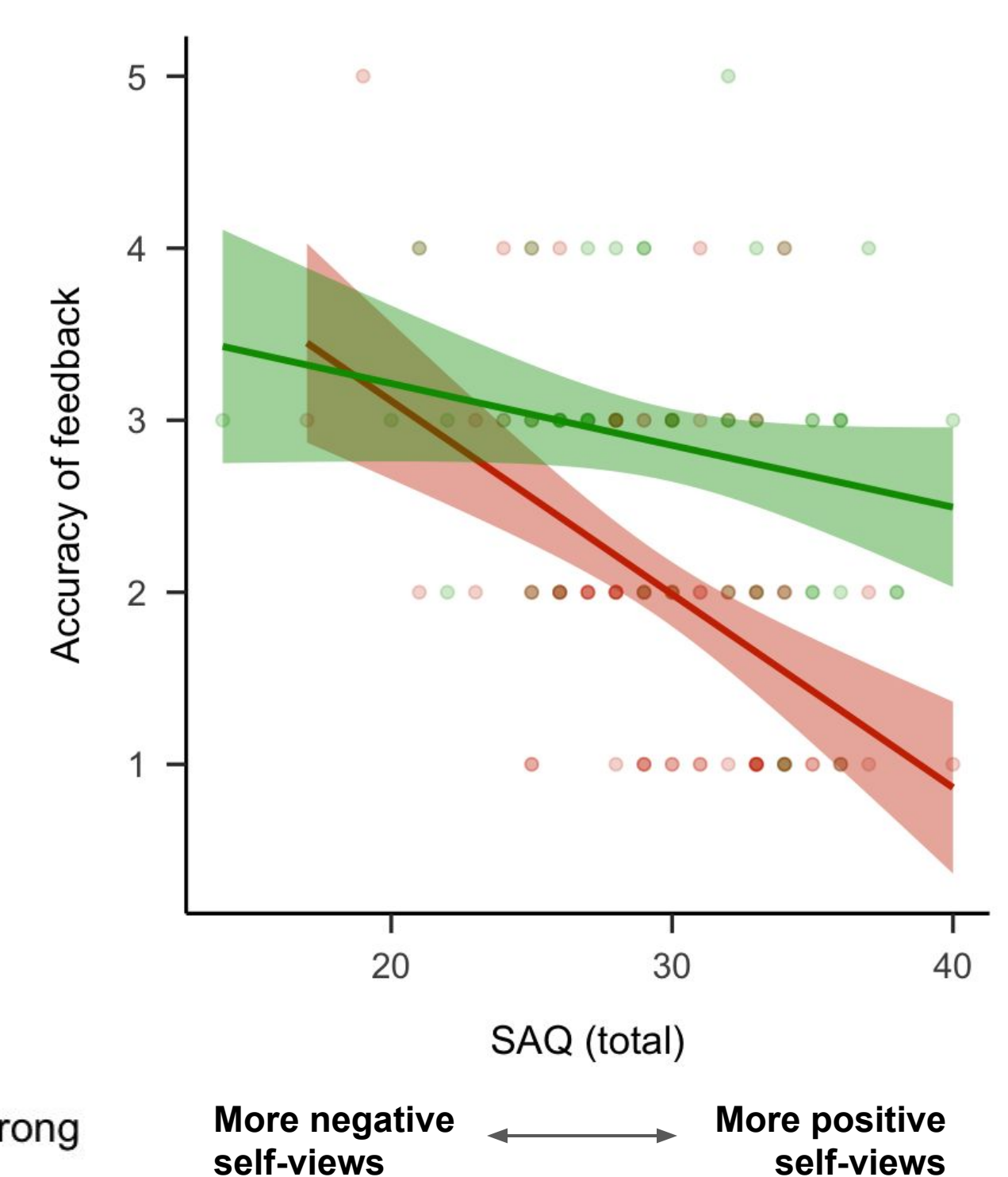
Feedback Choice

- Confirmatory feedback was chosen more often after giving a weak rating (for both self and peer) → **overall bias toward selecting negative feedback**
- Proportion of self-verifying choices was not significantly different between self-relevant and peer-relevant feedback



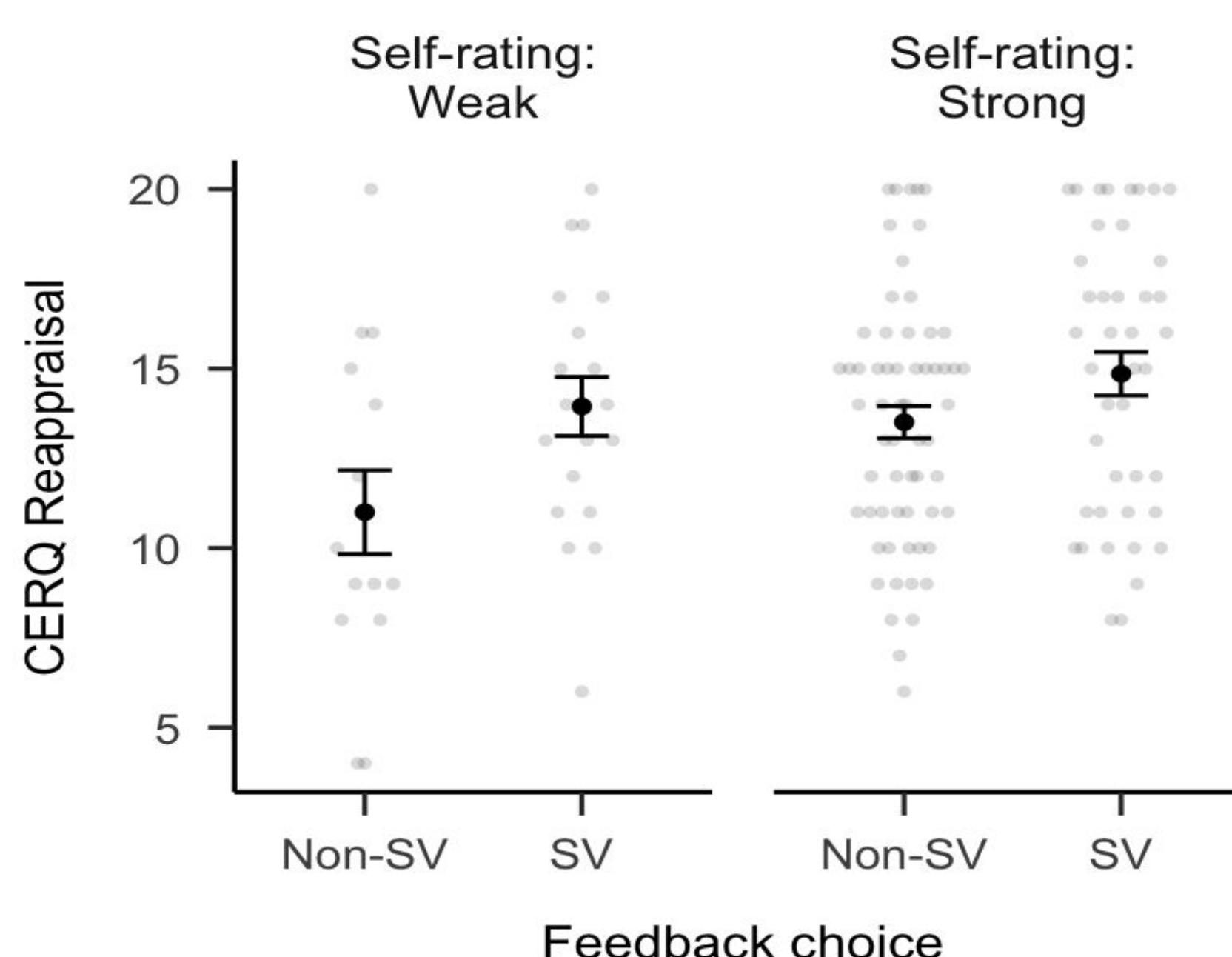
Accuracy Rating

- Self-evaluation on Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ; Pelham & Swann, 1992) correlated with self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale): $r = 0.56$, $p < .001$
- People with positive self-views rated weak feedback as less accurate** compared to the strong feedback



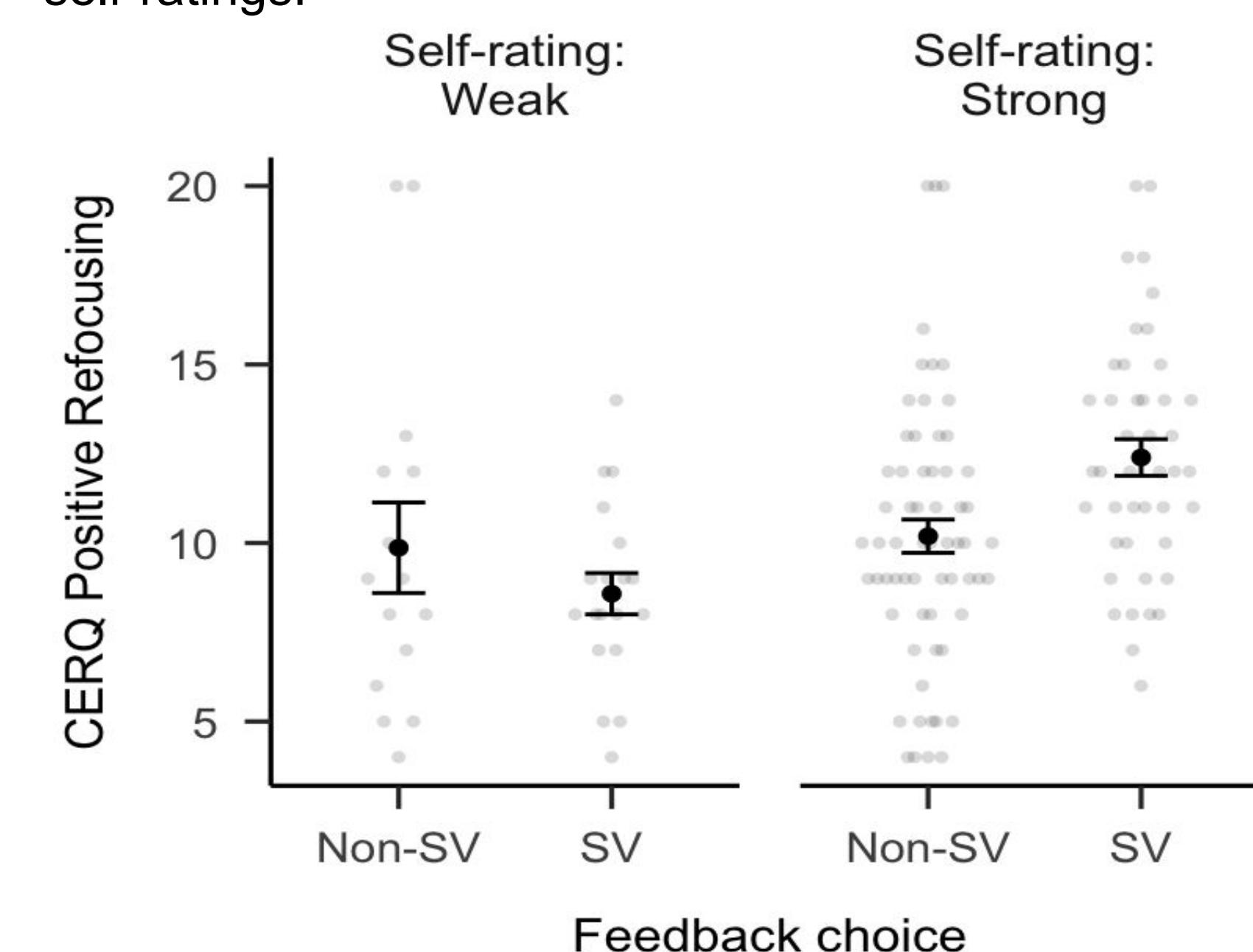
Was self-verification related to emotion regulation strategies?

Reappraisal scores were higher among people who self-verified, for both negative and positive self-ratings:



Main effects of target (self vs. other; $F(1, 133) = 4.99$, $p = .03$) and feedback choice (SV vs. Non-SV; $F(1, 133) = 7.22$, $p = .008$)

Positive refocusing scores were higher among people who self-verified, but only for positive self-ratings:



Main effects of target (self vs. other; $F(1, 133) = 8.84$, $p = 0.003$) and feedback choice (SV vs. Non-SV; $F(1, 133) = 4.65$, $p = 0.033$); significant interaction ($F(1, 133) = 5.86$, $p = 0.017$)

No other significant relationships between self-verification and other ER strategies:
- Acceptance
- Problem-solving
- Avoidance
- Rumination
- Perspective-taking
- Catastrophizing
- Self-blame
- Other-blame

No associations between ER strategies and ratings of feedback accuracy.

Discussion

- For feedback **choice**, self-verification was more likely among participants with negative self-views ("weak" self-ratings), but overall pattern was consistent with a general preference to learn about negative feedback. For rating the **accuracy** of feedback, participants with positive self-views rated negative ("weak") feedback as less accurate than positive ("strong") feedback, while people with more negative self-views perceived weak and strong feedback as equally accurate.
- Choice of self-verifying feedback was associated with use of reappraisal and positive refocusing.** These strategies may lead to preference for favorable feedback (positive refocusing) or reassessing disconfirming feedback as unimportant or lacking in credibility (reappraisal).
- Future research will aim to better understand how emotion regulation strategies are used in the task context when choosing among possible sources of feedback and when viewing detailed evaluations.
- Our results suggest that emotion regulation plays a role in choice of self-verifying evaluations, but not the evaluation of detailed feedback. Promoting adaptive emotion regulation strategies when choosing among sources of feedback may support positive emotions and self-esteem.