

DO YOU BELIEVE *YOUR* FUTURE

WILL BE HAPPIER THAN *MINE* ?

EFFECT OF VALENCE AND SELF-REFERENCE ON BELIEF IN FUTURE OCCURRENCE

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INTRODUCTION

- **Episodic future thinking** is our ability to mentally simulate future events¹
- These simulations vary in the extent to which we believe imagined events will actually happen to us, referred to as **belief in future occurrence**²
- Futures thinking has a "**self-enhancement**" function³, meaning that future simulations are more vivid and important when they are positive and involve the self.

OBJECTIVES

Main objective

- To determine the effect of valence and self-reference on belief in future occurrence.

Secondary objective

- To examine the effect of valence and self-reference on phenomenological characteristics.

METHODS

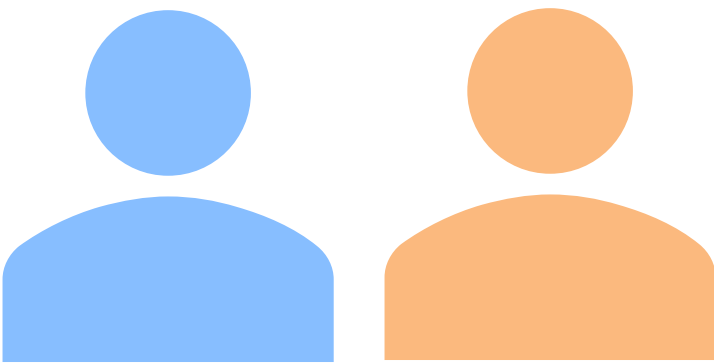
PARTICIPANTS

- N = 40 (21 women)
- 20 – 34 years (M = 23.5 years, SD = 2.34 years)

STEP 1

Participants completed a self-esteem scale⁴ and had to choose an **acquaintance** who was:

- close to their age ;
- of the same gender;
- known for at least one year;
- not close to them.



STEP 2

1. Imagination of four specific future events :

	<div><div></div><div>+</div></div>	<div><div></div><div>−</div></div>
<div><div></div></div>	A positive event referring to themselves	A negative event referring to themselves
<div><div></div></div>	A positive event referring to their acquaintance	A negative event referring to their acquaintance

2. Rating of each event on a 7-point Likert scale for belief (4 items) and phenomenological characteristics (13 items).

RESULTS

BELIEF IN FUTURE OCCURRENCE

Effect of valence

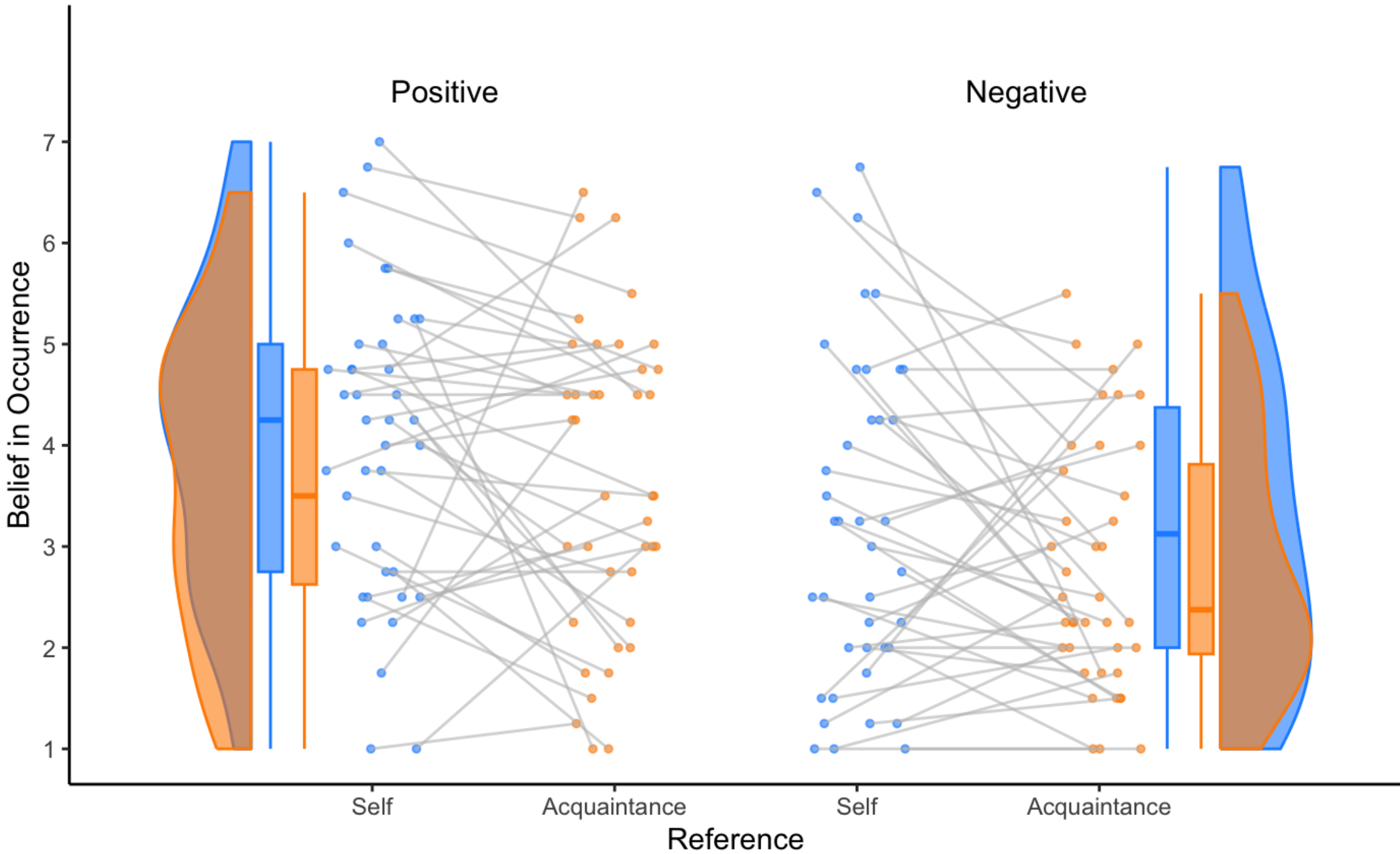
$F(1;117) = 22.118, p < 0.001$

Effect of reference

$F(1;117) = 5.24, p = 0.02$

Interaction

$F(1;117) = 0.008, p = 0.92$



PHENOMENOLOGICAL CHARACTERITICS

Effect of reference

Self > acquaintance

- Quantity of details
- Autonoetic experience
- Clarity and familiarity of location
- Personal importance
- Thoughts about the event

Effect of valence

Positive > negative :

- Personal importance
- Emotions

Interaction :

- Personal importance : positive > negative only in the self condition
- Emotions : more intense in the self condition

The other characteristics did not reveal significant effect

CONCLUSIONS

1. Positive events were associated with higher belief than negative events.
2. Events involving the self were associated with higher belief than events involving an acquaintance.
3. Self-enhancement does not seem to affect belief in future occurrence.
4. We partially replicate results of previous studies on positivity bias and self-reference effect.

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