

Introduction

Background

- Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is highly prevalent and debilitating (Kessler et al., 2012)
- Cognitive models of SAD place emphasis on maladaptive beliefs (Clark & Wells, 1995)
 - Fear of negative evaluation
 - Belief of low social competence
- Individuals with SAD report concerns about losing control in social situations (Hofmann, 2007)
 - Repetitive intrusive images of making a fool of oneself (Hackmann et al., 1998)
- Overimportance of control and concerns about control both predict SAD symptoms (De Castella et al., 2014)
- Beliefs about losing control are malleable and have been shown to lead to symptom-like behaviour in non-clinical samples (Gagné & Radomsky, 2017)

Research Question

- Do beliefs about losing control lead to anxiety and distress in social situations?

Hypotheses

1. High beliefs about losing control (HLC) condition > Low beliefs about losing control (LLC) condition:
 - a) Anxiety preceding a 'getting to know you' task
 - b) Anxiety during a 'getting to know you' task
2. HLC condition would:
 - a) have worse performance during the 'getting to know you' task
 - b) provide self-report ratings of performance which would be significantly lower than confederate-provided ratings.
3. Concerns about losing control over their behaviour, thoughts, emotions and physiology
 - HLC > LLC
4. Failures of control over their behaviour, emotions and physiological reactions
 - HLC > LLC

Method

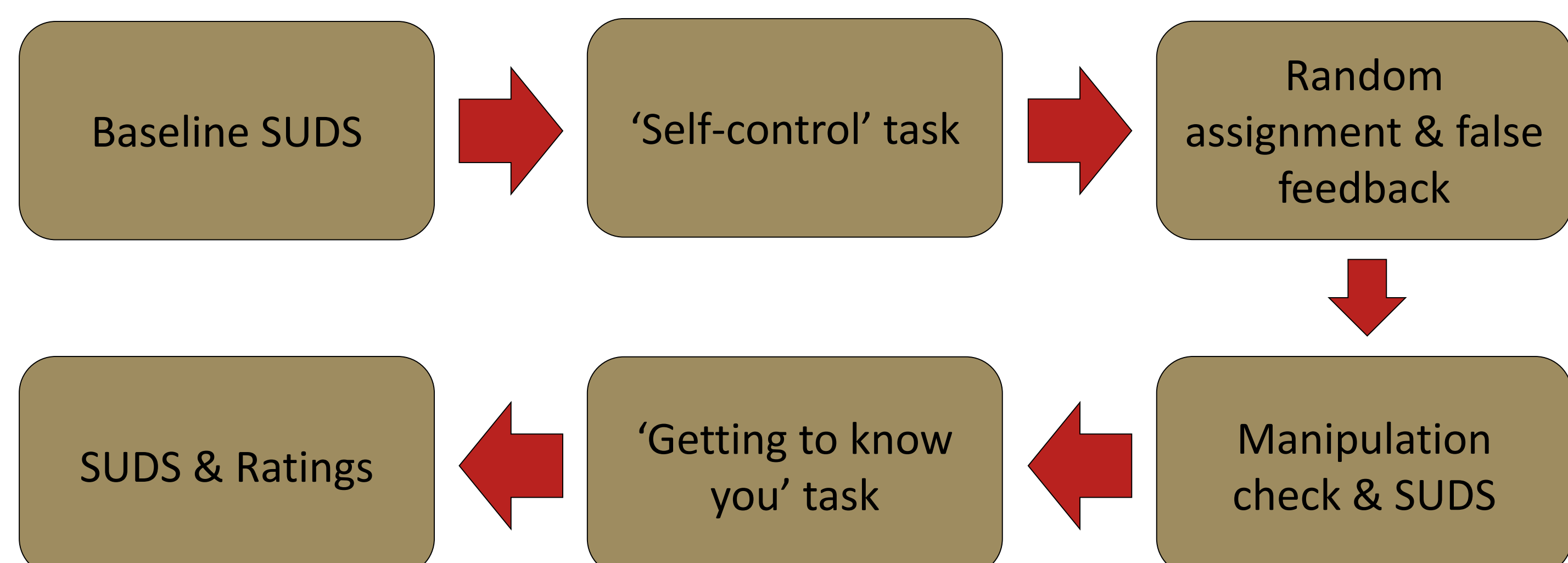
Participants

- Undergraduate students ($N = 130$) from the Concordia University.
- Mean age 22.3 ($SD = 3.8$) years old, 90% female.

Measures

- Manipulation check
- SUDS
- Ratings of performance during social interaction
 - Self-report and confederate ratings
- Ratings of concern over losing control
- Ratings of perceived loss of control

Procedure

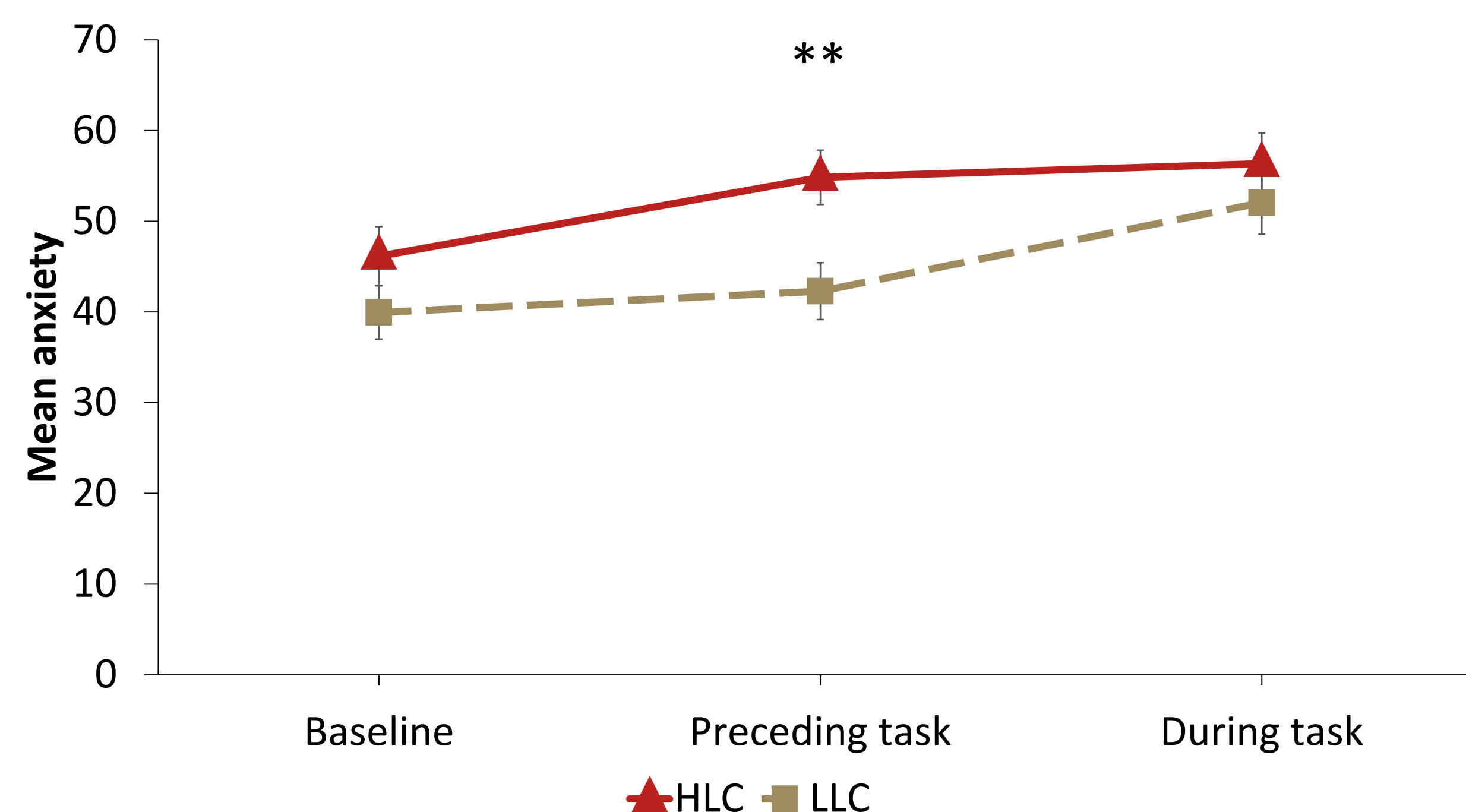


Manipulation check

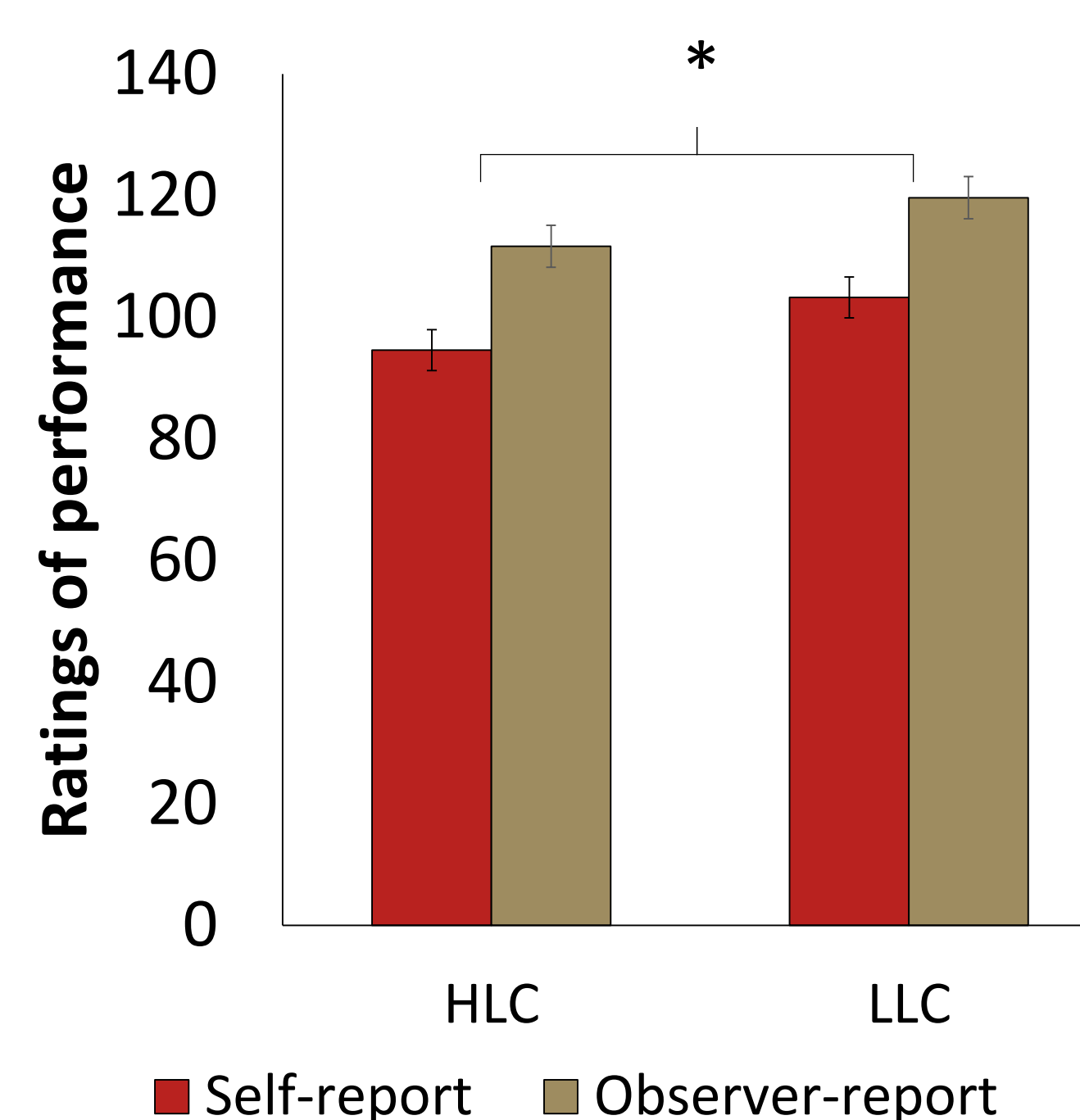
- Beliefs about losing control
 - HLC > LLC ($t(128) = 4.33, p < 0.001, d = 0.76$)

Results

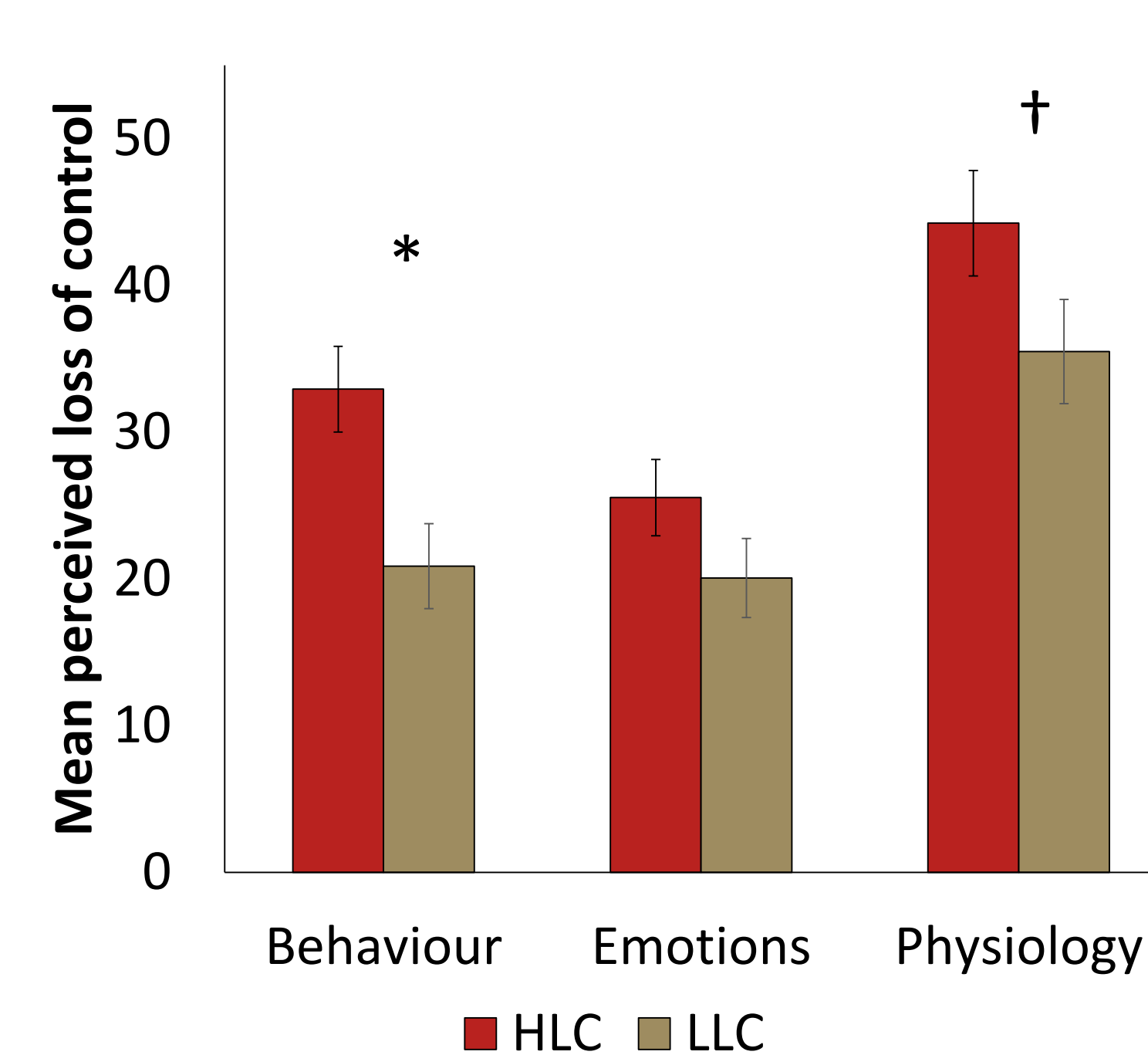
Subjective Anxiety Ratings



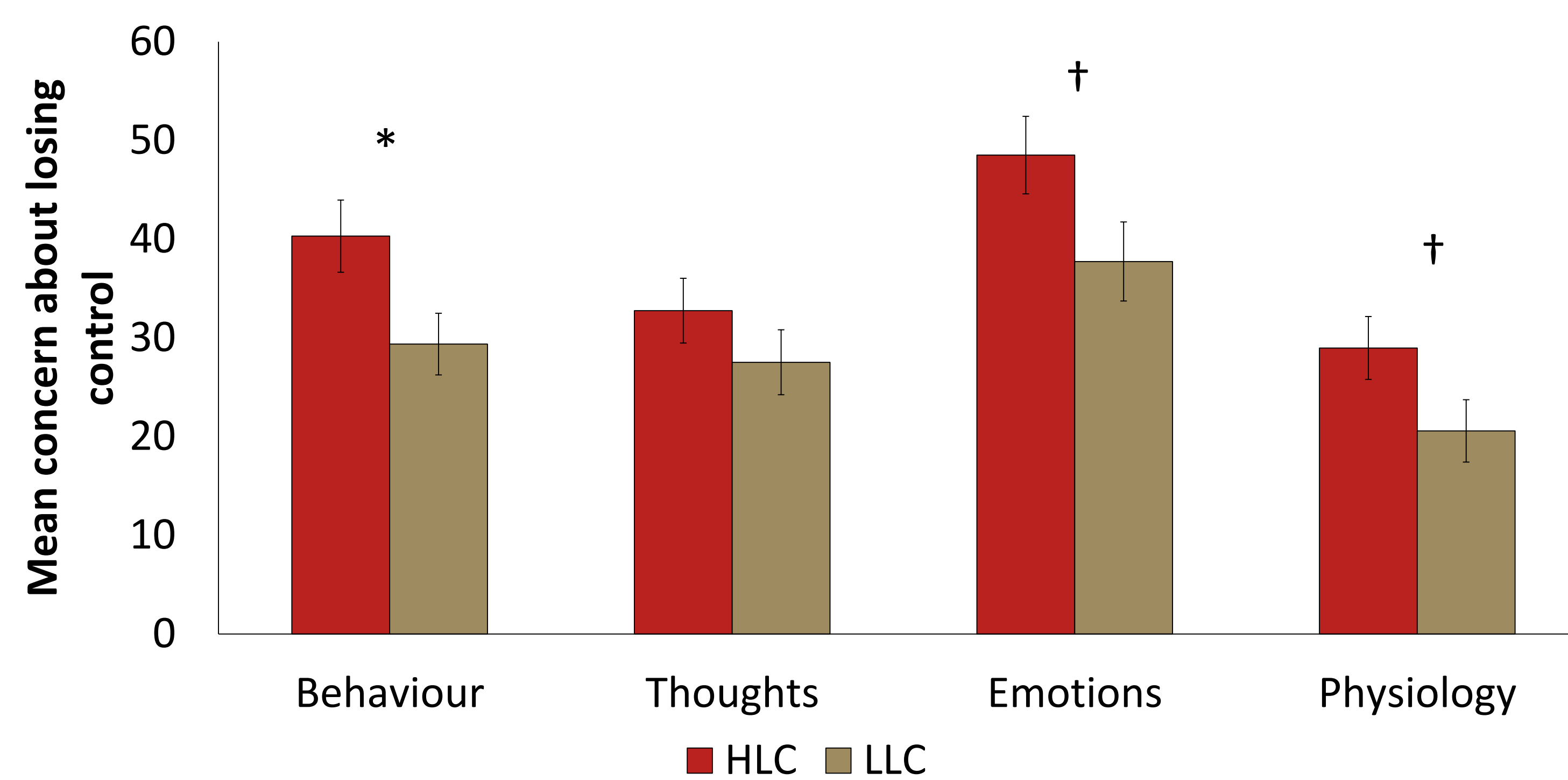
Performance



Perceived Failures of Control



Concern about losing control



† $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Discussion

- HLC condition reported more anxiety leading up to the 'getting to know you' task, but not during the task
 - May have been due to confederate behaviour
- HLC condition was perceived as less socially competent by self- and observer-report
- HLC condition, trend towards greater concern about losing control overall during the 'getting to know you' task
- HLC condition perceived losing a greater degree of control over their behaviour ($d = 0.51$), emotions ($d = 0.26$) and physiology ($d = 0.30$) during the 'getting to know you' task

Implications

- Manipulating beliefs about losing control produced self-doubt and concern about control, increasing subjective loss of control
- Beliefs about control may underlie self-focused attention
- Changing these beliefs may hold clinical significance

References

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