Leaning in to Shared Emotions: Does Prioritizing Positivity Boost Positivity Resonance with Weak Social Ties?

Alexandra M. Gray, Taylor N. West, & Barbara L. Fredrickson
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

INTRODUCTION

- **Prioritizing positivity**: an individualized difference of structuring one’s day to experience spontaneous positive emotions
- **Positivity resonance**: a positive social connection of co-experienced positive emotions that is characterized by shared positive affect, caring nonverbal synchrony, and biological synchrony
- **Prioritizing positivity and positivity resonance** are both positively associated with flourishing mental health
- **Prioritizing positivity** may change over time partly because greater levels of positive emotions at an initial exposure to an activity may produce engagement in that activity
- **Socially connecting with weak ties is important for well-being** and positivity resonance with weak ties produces positive outcomes
- **Behavioral Indicators of Positivity Resonance (BIPR)**, a behavioral coding system for positivity resonance, has only been used in the context of strong ties

Aim: To investigate whether BIPR with strangers (positivity resonance with strangers) explains the link between increased prioritizing positivity and flourishing mental health.

METHOD

Participants
- N = 349, 20-64 years old (M = 34.1, SD = 11.27)

Measures
- **Abbreviated Prioritizing Positivity Scale** (PriPos): measures the degree to which one arranges their day-to-day life to experience positive emotions (α = .84)
- **Abbreviated Ten-Item Personality Inventory** (TIPI): Extraversion scale (α = .77) and one Openness to Experiences item to assess these personality traits
- **Mental Health Continuum-Short Form**: measures flourishing mental health (α = .91)
- **Positivity Resonance Scale**: 35 days of nightly reports of positivity resonance event reconstruction with weak ties (i.e., strangers and acquaintances; α = .99)
- **Behavioral Indicators of Positivity Resonance (BIPR)**: behavioral coding system of positivity resonance on a 3-point scale (intraclass coefficient = .89)
- **Observer’s Rating of Positivity Resonance**: examiner’s perceived positivity resonance rating of interaction with participant (α = .98)

RESULTS

- Prioritizing positivity may be a stable trait or have a ceiling effect
- BIPR with strangers may need to be modified to be more applicable to stronger interactions
- Shared positive emotions and positive social connections with weak ties are important for well-being
- Positivity resonance with weak ties partly explains the link between prioritizing positivity and flourishing mental health
- Positivity resonance with weak ties is one way to lean in to an opportunity to boost positive emotions

Exploratory Analysis
- **Positivity resonance with weak ties partially mediated (22.7%)** the association between prioritizing positivity and flourishing mental health

DISCUSSION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES


For any questions, please contact Alexandra Gray at aleemegan@live.unc.edu

For more information, visit the BIPR website: https://bipr.org