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

Prioritizing positivity is an individual difference variable that is positively associated with flourishing mental health, yet less understood are the processes that underlie this link. Theory suggests that positivity resonance with weak ties offers moments of positive social connection that produce positive emotions to promote flourishing mental health. It is possible that prioritizing positivity increases as additional experiences of positive emotions encourage individuals to lean in to future opportunities to experience more positive emotions. We hypothesized that positivity resonance with strangers is a mediator between increased prioritizing positivity and flourishing mental health. Participants (N = 349) were surveyed at two time points seven weeks apart, completed nightly reports for up to 35 days, and had an interaction with a stranger (i.e., the examiner) during an in-lab visit that was later coded for positivity resonance. We sought to apply the newly developed Behavioral Indicators of Positivity Resonance (BIPR) coding system to measure positivity resonance between strangers, but with little evidence of validity and null results, we used self-reported positivity resonance with weak ties from the 35 nightly reports. Additionally, prioritizing positivity did not increase over the course of the study, prompting us to conduct exploratory analyses in which the association between prioritizing positivity (T1) and flourishing mental health (T2) was partially mediated by self-reported perceived positivity resonance with weak ties. These findings indicate that high-quality positive social connection with weak ties is a fruitful avenue for boosting positive emotions with implications for flourishing.