

From Micro-Moments to World Beliefs: Testing the Association Between Positive

Social Connections and the Belief in the Benevolence of Others



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Introduction

- ❖ Throughout the course of history, a deceptively simple question has captivated society: are humans inherently good or bad?
- ❖ The perception of humans as inherently bad or selfish may perpetuate a vicious cycle, wherein individuals remain isolated and reluctant to engage in future relationships
- ❖ My study proposes fostering positive social connections as a promising solution to break this cycle
- ❖ Previous research has highlighted the difficulty of persuading individuals to change their beliefs directly - I suggest that improving the affective quality of social interactions with other people may be more feasible and effective in shifting people's beliefs

Methodology

Participants:

- ❖ Archival data from a larger 12-week study ($N=100$, 1,586 episode-level observations)
- ❖ $M_{age} = 47.26$, $SD_{age} = 10.58$
- ❖ 54% female, 46% male
- ❖ 5.1% Asian, 31.3% Black, 58.5% White, 5.1% mixed race

Procedure:

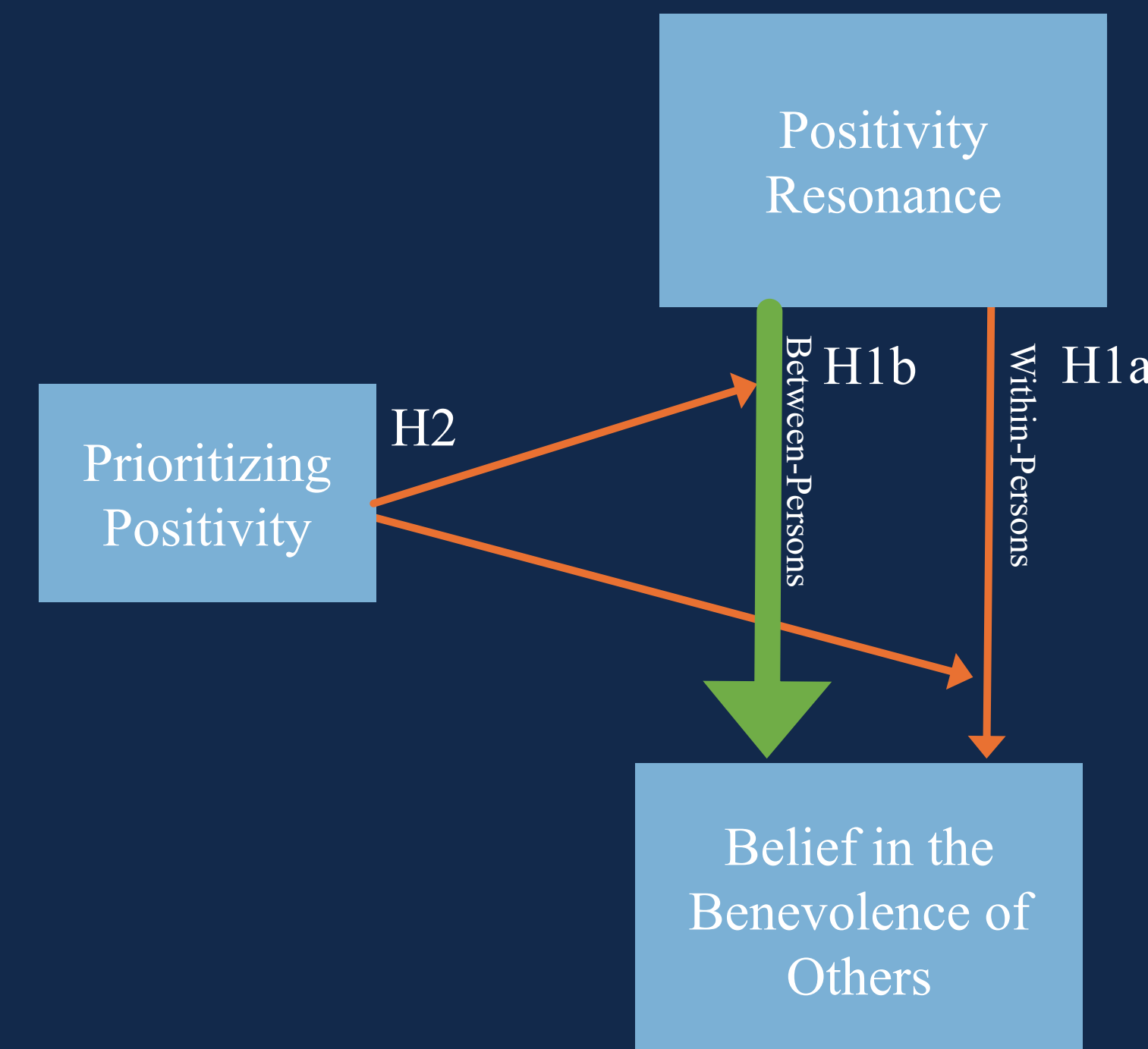
- ❖ All variables measured at the episodic level from Day Reconstruction Method (DRM) surveys¹ during weeks 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9.
- ❖ DRM survey - participants recorded their previous day in a series of episodes, similar to a diary, and responded to the same set of questions about their activities and feelings for each episode

Measures:

- *Positivity Resonance*² - measured using a 7-item measure. E.g., "For what proportion of time during this episode (from 0 to 100 percent) did you experience a mutual sense of warmth and concern toward other(s)?"
- *Prioritizing Positivity*³ - measured on a 4-point scale (1=*not at all*, 4=*extremely*) with a 3-item measure including "To what extent did you engage in this activity to make yourself feel good?"
- *Belief in the Benevolence of Others* - measured on a 4-point scale (1=*not at all*, 4=*extremely*) including "To what extent did this episode leave you feeling that people are basically good?"

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill approved the use of this archival dataset for the purpose of this honors thesis (#24-0072).

Results



H1b: $b = 0.23$, $p = <.001$

Results revealed that compared to individuals who experienced less positivity resonance, individuals who experienced *more positivity resonance* also reported *stronger benevolent beliefs*.



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Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1a: I predict a within-person association such that during episodes in which individuals experienced more positivity resonance (relative to other episodes), they would hold stronger benevolent beliefs of others.

Hypothesis 1b: I predict a between-person effect such that individuals who, on average, experienced more positivity resonance (relative to other individuals) would hold stronger benevolent beliefs of others.

Hypothesis 2: I predict prioritizing positivity will serve as a moderator, both at the within and between-levels. If individuals intentionally plan social activities, the association between positivity resonance and the belief in the benevolence of others will be stronger.

Discussion

- ❖ First study to examine how social connections are associated with worldviews at the episodic level.
- ❖ Experiences of positivity resonance do not require intentional planning and the benefits from these recurring moments can shift our beliefs in a positive way beyond conscious recognition.
- ❖ Suggest potential for an upward spiral - reoccurring moments of positivity resonance can foster positive beliefs about others, which can open up more opportunities for positive connections.
- ❖ **Future Research Should:**
 - ❖ Investigate causality and directionality, explore whether beliefs can be reshaped solely through the accumulation of positive social experiences over time, as opposed to immediately.
 - ❖ Consider the nuances of different types of social interactions and how they affect the relationship with beliefs (weak vs. strong ties).

References

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3. Catalino, L. I., Algoe, S. B., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2014). Prioritizing positivity: An effective approach to pursuing happiness? *Emotion (Washington, D.C.)*, 14(6), 1155-1161. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038029>

