

Young Adolescents' Responses to Positive Events: Associations With Positive Affect and Adjustment

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Abstract

This study examined how maximizing and minimizing responses to positive events were associated with sustained positive feelings about the events and adjustment in a community sample of 56 young adolescents (31 boys and 25 girls, 10-14 years of age). On daily reports, adolescents reported their positive emotional reactions to their best event each day. A week later, they reported their responses to their most intense positive event across the 4 days. Parents and adolescents reported on adolescents' adjustment. The results indicated that maximizing responses were related to more intense feelings about the events 1 week later. Minimizing responses were associated with internalizing and externalizing behaviors over and above coping with negative events. The findings indicated that adolescents can maximize or capitalize on positive events but that minimizing is linked to poorer adjustment. Our study parallels existing research with adults and offers new information about young adolescents' responses to positive events.

Keywords

positive events, positive emotions, maximize, savor, capitalize, minimize, early adolescence, internalizing, externalizing

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The experience of negative life events can have detrimental consequences for one's emotional and physical health (e.g., Cohen et al., 1998; Kendler, Karkowski, & Prescott, 1999). Yet we know from the large literature on stress and coping that relying on adaptive coping strategies can help people be resilient and not incur serious or lasting consequences from exposure to negative life events (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001; Magnus, Cowen, Wyman, Fagen, & Work, 1999). By comparison, although we know that positive events have beneficial effects on people's well-being (e.g., Reich & Zautra, 1981), very little is known about how people may respond differently to positive events in their lives. Research is emerging on adults' responses to positive events (e.g., Bryant, 2003; Langston, 1994; Quoidbach, Berry, Hansenne, & Mikolajczak, 2010; Reis et al., 2010), but published work with adolescents is very limited (for exceptions, Bijttebier, Raes, Vasey, & Feldman, 2012; Cafasso, Bryant, & Jose, 1994, as cited in Bryant & Veroff, 2007). However, studying responses to positive events and emotions in children is acknowledged as an important direction for future research (Bryant, Chadwick, & Kluwe, 2011). Consequently, we focused our investigation on how young adolescents respond to positive events and how these responses are associated with their adjustment as indexed by their depressive symptoms and internalizing and externalizing behavior problems.

Research with adults has identified particular types of adaptive responses to positive events or emotions. Although different terms are used, there are clear overlapping components among researchers' conceptualizations. Capitalizing is a more specific term referring to sharing and celebrating positive events with others and marking their occurrences (Langston, 1994). Positive rumination is another specific term that refers to the positive emotion regulation response of reflecting on one's strengths and positive feelings (Feldman, Joormann, & Johnson, 2008). Other terms are more encompassing of a wider range of responses to positive events. Savoring (Bryant, 1989) refers to responses that prolong or enhance positive affect and includes sharing and expressing as well as a myriad of other behaviors, such as being absorbed in the moment, sharpening one's perception of the event, and making favorable comparisons (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Maximizing, another broad term, includes capitalizing responses (sharing, marking, and celebrating) as well as positive reflection on the event or one's positive affect (Gentzler, Kerns, & Keener, 2010).

All of these responses are considered adaptive because they are associated with more positive outcomes or less negative outcomes in adults. Specifically, more frequent capitalizing responses are linked to higher levels of positive emotions over time, above and beyond the effects of the events themselves, suggesting these responses may allow people to reap more benefits from

positive events in their lives (Langston, 1994). Savoring is correlated with greater life satisfaction and negatively associated with depressive symptoms in adults (Bryant, 2003; Quoidbach et al., 2010). Researchers have also tied these adaptive responses to positive events to stable, trait-like characteristics. For instance, adults who endorse more savoring beliefs report greater optimism, extraversion, and less neuroticism (Bryant, 2003) and higher levels of positive rumination are linked to higher self-esteem (Feldman et al., 2008). Maximizing, as evidenced in a behavioral paradigm, also was more frequent among more securely attached individuals (Gentzler et al., 2010). Thus, even though current goals may sometimes necessitate prioritizing negative affect over positive affect (Tamir, 2009), generally these maximizing or savoring types of strategies may be useful in sustaining positive affect and gaining other rewards (e.g., relationship benefits, Reis et al., 2010) from positive events.

By contrast, maladaptive responses to positive events are those that attenuate positive affect and therefore interfere with one's ability to reap benefits from positive events and the resulting emotions. These types of responses are called minimizing (Gentzler et al., 2010), dampening (Feldman et al., 2008; Quoidbach et al., 2010; Wood, Heimpel, & Michela, 2003), or kill-joy responses (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). In general, these strategies comprise negative thoughts when positive events or emotions occur, such as downplaying the event's significance, attributing its occurrence to factors outside of one's control, or thinking the positive feelings will not last (e.g., Feldman et al., 2008; Gentzler et al., 2010; Quoidbach et al., 2010). Prior research with adults indicates that these types of dampening strategies result in more negative mood and lower self-esteem (Wood et al., 2003) and that greater reliance on them predicts increases in depressive symptoms (Raes, Smets, Nelis, & Schoofs, 2012).

An important question is the extent to which this research with adult samples can be applied to youth (Bryant et al., 2011). One investigation on savoring beliefs in a large sample of fifth to eighth graders suggested there may be similar detectable patterns of responses in youth (Cafasso et al., 1994, as cited in Bryant & Veroff, 2007). These researchers found a single facet for savoring, which suggests young adolescents may not differentiate among specific types of savoring as much as adults. Yet importantly, higher levels of young adolescents' savoring capacity were related to better well-being. Also, with a sample of 10- to 14-year olds, Bittjebier et al. (2012) recently found that higher levels of positive rumination and lower levels of dampening were concurrently related to depressive symptoms and that less positive rumination predicted greater increases in symptoms for those who also reported more negative life events.

Other relevant research includes studies on attribution style and depression, which often use the Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire (Seligman

et al., 1984) or its revised version (Kaslow & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991; Thompson, Kaslow, Weiss, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). This work (Gladstone & Kaslow, 1995; Joiner & Wagner, 1995) indicates that the attributions that are linked to higher levels of depressive symptoms are inferences that causes of positive events are specific (rather than global), unstable (rather than stable over time), and external (rather than internal resulting from one's own actions). These attributions could be examples of minimizing responses because they attenuate the effects of the event and the resulting positive affect. Based on this literature, we could expect that minimizing responses would relate to higher levels of depressive symptoms or internalizing problems in adolescents. The association between minimizing responses to positive events and externalizing problems is less clear. Therefore, the current study can offer new information on whether or not greater minimizing responses or fewer maximizing responses relate to externalizing behavioral difficulties in youth.

In the present study, we focused on youth in the early adolescence period (10-14 years of age) because most research to date has included adult or late adolescent samples. We selected this age specifically because it may be the earliest point at which we could assess responses using self-reports. By mid- to late childhood, children start to more frequently rely on cognitive coping strategies with negative events (Rossman, 1992), and many of the responses to positive events also are cognitively based and rely on metacognitive abilities to accurately answer the questions (e.g., how often did you "think about how good you felt?"). Thus, by this age, young adolescents should have the capacity to respond in these ways and to report on their use. Additionally, because depression before adolescence is less common (e.g., Hankin et al., 1998), a sample of young adolescents rather than children is more appropriate given our focus includes depressive symptoms.

Our study included event-specific scales to assess maximizing (i.e., sharing, marking, or celebrating the event, or reflecting on the event and positive emotions) and minimizing (e.g., downplaying the event's significance and its likelihood to recur). We chose to use real events from adolescents' lives to increase the ecological validity of the events and potentially improve their ability to report on their behaviors in response to a specific, real event. By using a short-term longitudinal study, we also were able to examine how adolescents' feelings about the events changed over time.

We had two major hypotheses. First, based on prior research with adults (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004; Langston 1994), we hypothesized that adolescents' maximizing responses to a personal positive event would predict more sustained positive affect about the event over time. Second, we examined global indices of adolescents' adjustment, by focusing on their symptom

levels of internalizing, externalizing, and depression. We hypothesized that adolescents who endorse higher levels of maximizing would have lower levels of symptoms, whereas those endorsing higher levels of minimizing would have higher symptom levels. Moreover, we expected that responses to positive events would predict adolescents' adjustment even when controlling for coping with negative events.

Method

Sample

A sample of 56 young adolescents (31 boys, 25 girls) participated in a 3-part study involving an initial meeting, 4 days of daily reports, and a follow-up interview. Adolescents ranged in age from 10 to 14 years of age, with a mean of 11.88 years ($SD = 1.38$). They were mostly White (76.8%), 1.8% was Black, and the remaining 19.6% were identified by parents as biracial (5.4% Black and White, 5.4% Asian and White, 5.4% American Indian and White, and 3.6% Latino and White). Siblings were permitted to participate in the study. We did not have specific predictions regarding within-family effects, but we did not consider it necessary to exclude interested siblings given analytical strategies that can account for nested data. The 56 adolescents came from 45 families and included 5 sibling dyads and 3 sibling triads. Most participating parents (92.9%) were the biological mother of the child, whereas 5.4% were the biological father and one reported the "other" category (neither biological parent nor stepparent). The parents who participated reported their highest education level: 3.6% completed 9th to 12th grade, 17.9% reported some college or trade school education; 39.3% graduated from college and another 39.3% completed graduate school. The majority of adolescents were also currently in two-parent households: 85.7% had a mother and a father (either biological or stepparent) in the home (12.5% had single parents and 1.8% was missing data).

These 56 youth were from a larger sample of 65 children. Children younger than 10 were excluded ($n = 4$) because initially there was a younger minimum age (7 years) for eligibility. However, we increased the minimum age to 10 years after the first 5 participants because it was apparent that some younger children had difficulty with completing the daily report forms without help from their parents and understanding some items. Also 5 adolescents were excluded for not following the study's procedure. Specifically, 3 adolescents only completed the initial in-person session and 2 adolescents mailed the daily reports back late and all on the same day. The latter was problematic

because the daily reports needed to be completed each day for them to be valid (particularly when assessing change in emotions over time).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from a small southeastern town in the United States. Adolescents were recruited by advertising the study at the university and in the local community. Advertising included posting flyers at various public places in the community (e.g., restaurants, library), distributing emails on listservs to university employees, and in-person recruitment at child-related events at a mall, school sports events, and the local Boys and Girls Club.

Interested parents called research staff to set up a time for the initial session, which took place at the family's home or in the research lab. At the initial session, after completing consent and giving assent, parents and adolescents completed surveys. Parents completed the Child Behavior Checklist at this time. (Additional surveys were completed by the adolescents and parents at this session but are not included in the current manuscript.) Also, adolescents received a folder with their daily reports and were given instructions on how to complete them. Adolescents were told they should complete the forms at the end of each day for 4 days starting on the next Monday and that each morning they should mail their previous day's survey back to the university in a postage-paid envelope. This method was chosen to increase confidence that adolescents completed the forms each night, rather than waiting to do them all on one day. By getting daily reports, the event-to-reporting delay is shorter, which may decrease the amount of bias in estimating their immediate emotional reactions to the events. On these reports, adolescents described their most negative and positive event each day, then rated their immediate emotional reactions to the chosen events.

The follow-up session occurred by telephone except for two adolescents who were interviewed in person. We initially had planned to conduct all follow-up sessions in person at adolescents' schools, but because that plan was not possible in the local schools, we changed the format to a more feasible phone interview. At the initial sessions, research staff gave adolescents a sheet with the rating scales so that the youth could more easily answer the questions by phone. During this follow-up interview, adolescents were asked details about their emotional reactions and emotion regulation responses to a single negative and positive event that occurred during the daily report period. Adolescents also completed a short survey about their depressive symptoms. Researchers selected the negative and positive events that elicited the most intense initial emotional reaction from adolescents' daily reports. If multiple

events elicited the same response, one was chosen at random. This methodology was used to increase the likelihood of their reporting on more meaningful events. The interview generally occurred a week after the daily reports. The time interval between the day of the specific positive event discussed and the follow-up interview ranged from 4 to 12 days ($M = 8.45$ days, $SD = 2.01$).

Measures

Emotional reactions to events. For the 4 days of daily reports, after describing the best thing that happened to them that day, adolescents were asked about their initial emotional reaction when the event first occurred. Specifically, they were asked to indicate how happy, excited, and proud they felt when the event happened on a 5-point scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*really happy/excited/proud*). These were averaged to create the *Time 1 Positive Affect* ($\alpha = .43$) scale. Although these items showed low reliability, we intentionally included distinct positive emotions that were likely to be evoked from adolescents' best event of their day. Also, they were asked overall how good the event was on the same 5-point scale.

During the follow-up telephone interviews, researchers described the most positive event that the participant had reported during the 4-day daily report period. Adolescents were asked how they feel about the event now by indicating how happy, excited, and proud they feel using the same 5-point scale as the initial ratings. These ratings were then averaged to create a *Time 2 Positive Affect* ($\alpha = .73$) scale.

Responses to positive events. A brief set of questions was developed to assess maximizing and minimizing responses to the adolescents' most positive event that occurred across the daily report period. Adolescents responded to these questions during the follow-up interview and were asked to only think about the chosen event. The 4-item maximizing scale ($\alpha = .68$) assessed celebrating, sharing, or reflecting on the positive event and feelings (e.g., "you did something to celebrate or reward yourself;" "you thought about how good you felt"), which were based on similar items with adults (Gentzler et al., 2010; Langston, 1994). The 3-item minimizing scale ($\alpha = .55$) assessed downplaying the event's significance or likelihood to recur (e.g., "you decided the event was not a big deal;" "you thought that this won't happen again or that your feelings won't last"). One item ("you did not think about it") was deleted from the minimizing scale because it was not highly correlated with the other items, resulting in the 3 final items. Adolescents reported on the frequency of these items on a 5-point scale from 0 (*did not do this at all*) to 4 (*did it a lot*). Corresponding items were averaged to create the two scales.

Coping with negative events. To assess coping with negative events, during the follow-up interview adolescents reported on their adaptive and maladaptive coping responses to their most negative event across the 4-day daily report period. Again, they were asked to only think about the chosen event, which was selected by researchers because it elicited the most intense emotional reaction (by averaging adolescents' ratings from the daily reports for their sad, mad, scared, and upset emotional reactions). The 6-item adaptive coping scale ($\alpha = .63$) assessed reappraisal, distraction, problem solving, and support seeking (e.g., "you tried to find something good about the situation;" "you did something to solve the problem"). The 4-item maladaptive coping scale ($\alpha = .61$) assessed avoidant coping or ruminative responses (e.g., "you thought about how upset you were;" "you tried not to think about it"). Adolescents reported the frequency on a 5-point scale from 0 (*did not do this at all*) to 4 (*did it a lot*) and corresponding items were averaged to create the two scales.

Adolescent adjustment. To index adjustment, we used the Child Behavior Checklist's internalizing and externalizing scales (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991) and the shortened Children's Depression Inventory (CDI-S; Kovacs, 1992). Parents completed the CBCL during the initial meeting to assess their child's externalizing ($\alpha = .87$) and internalizing ($\alpha = .84$) problem behaviors. Parents reported on the occurrence of problem behaviors in the last 6 months on a 3-point scale from 0 (*not true*) to 2 (*very true or often true*). Corresponding items were summed to create the internalizing scale (assessing anxious and depressive symptoms, withdrawal, and somatic complaints) and the externalizing scale (assessing aggressive and delinquent behaviors).

Adolescents completed the 10-item CDI-S (Kovacs, 1992) during the follow-up interview to assess *depressive symptoms* ($\alpha = .64$). For each item, adolescents were presented with a group of 3 sentences and were asked to pick the sentence that best described them for the past 2 weeks (e.g., "I am sad once in a while," "I am sad many times," or "I am sad all the time"). The sentence selected for each item was scored from 0 to 2, and items were summed to create scale scores with higher scores indicating greater depressive symptoms.

Analytic Approach

We report preliminary analyses, followed by tests of our hypotheses using mixed models. We relied on mixed models so that parental ID could be included as a random effect to account for dependency in the data resulting from the inclusion of siblings. Intraclass correlations suggested that siblings in our data set were differentially related to each other compared to nonsiblings to each other on Time 2 positive affect and externalizing. Specifically,

Table 1. Descriptive Information on Major Variables of Interest.

	Mean	SD	Range
Positive affective reactions to the event			
Time 1 (immediately after event)	3.03	.74	1.33-4
Time 2 (4-12 days later)	1.89	1.05	0-3.67
Initial rating of event (how good)	3.55	.63	2-4
Responses to the positive event			
Maximizing	1.79	1.00	0-4
Minimizing	.77	.75	0-2.67
Coping responses to the negative event			
Adaptive coping	1.57	.81	0-3
Maladaptive coping	1.28	.91	0-3.5
Adolescents' adjustment			
Internalizing symptoms	6.66	5.51	0-20
Externalizing symptoms	5.50	5.66	0-23
Depressive symptoms	1.23	1.61	0-7

the family effect accounted for significant variance in Time 2 positive affect, 25% of the total variance ($ICC = .248, p = .034$), and in the externalizing score, 24% of the total variance ($ICC = .243, p = .04$). The family effect was not significant for depressive symptoms ($ICC = .059$) or internalizing ($ICC = .010$). The below four models were run using SAS (Version 9.3) Proc Mixed (Littell, Miliken, Stroup, & Wolfinger, 1996) with restricted maximum likelihood estimation and Kenward-Roger adjusted degrees of freedom, which is appropriate for small sample sizes with unbalanced designs (Kenward & Roger, 1997). Based on Rosnow, Rosenthal, and Rubin (2000), we also reported effect sizes for the fixed-effect predictors using $r_{\text{effect size}} = \sqrt{(t^2/(t^2+df))}$.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive information is provided in Table 1. Regarding the bivariate correlations pertaining specifically to responses to positive events (see Table 2), the results indicated that maximizing and minimizing were uncorrelated. Maximizing was positively correlated with reported positive emotions at both time points. Additionally, maximizing was positively correlated with

Table 2. Correlations Between Major Variables of Interest.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. T1 positive affect	–								
2. T2 positive affect	.59***	–							
3. Initial rating of event	.49***	.15	–						
4. Maximizing	.51***	.57***	.25	–					
5. Minimizing	.19	–.04	.08	–.00	–				
6. Adaptive coping	.24	.09	–.01	.37**	.21	–			
7. Maladaptive coping	.17	.02	.17	.15	.18	.59***	–		
8. Internalizing	.04	.01	.02	–.10	.36**	–.01	.19	–	
9. Externalizing	–.17	–.16	–.07	–.24	.42**	.03	–.06	.37**	–
10. Depressive symptoms	–.13	–.12	–.36**	–.11	.13	.00	.01	.10	.22

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

adaptive coping with the negative event, but minimizing was unrelated to event-specific maladaptive coping. Minimizing was linked to more internalizing and externalizing symptoms.

Predicting Later Positive Affect Toward the Event

To address the first hypothesis, that maximizing would predict higher levels of sustained positive affect about the chosen positive event, a linear mixed model was computed with 4 fixed-effects predictors: (a) maximizing, (b) minimizing, (c) Time 1 positive affect (immediate emotional reactions to the events), and (d) the time interval between the event and follow-up interview. The interval was included because the longer time intervals may result in less intense positive feelings about the event (Walker, Vogl, & Thompson, 1997) regardless of the amount of maximizing. As shown in Table 3, initial positive affect predicted higher levels of positive affect about the event during follow-up, suggesting that adolescents who reported more intense initial emotional reactions to the events tended to report higher levels of positive emotions over time. Also, consistent with our hypotheses, greater engagement in maximizing responses predicted more intense positive affect over time. The effect sizes for maximizing and initial PA are considered medium

Table 3. Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Adolescents' Later Positive Affect Toward the Positive Event.

Predictors	Time 2 positive affect				
	B	SE	df	t	Effect size
Intercept	1.88	.11	41.7	16.48***	
Maximize	0.39	.13	50.9	3.03**	.39
Minimize	-0.16	.15	49.4	-1.07	.15
T1 positive affect	0.59	.17	47.6	3.46**	.45
Event-interview interval	0.02	.06	49.0	0.27	.04

Note: B = unstandardized estimates.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

in size because they fall between .30 and .50 (Cohen, 1992). Minimizing responses were unrelated to later positive affect.

Examining Adolescents' Adjustment

To test the hypothesis that maximizing and minimizing would be linked to adolescents' adjustment, each model included 5 fixed-effects predictors: (a) maximizing, (b) minimizing, (c) adaptive coping, (d) maladaptive coping, and (e) the initial rating of how good the event was. The initial rating of the event was included as a covariate because it may be the case that adolescents with more emotional or behavioral difficulties do not experience as frequent or intense positive events as others do. As shown in Table 4, results indicated that higher levels of minimizing were associated with higher levels of parent-reported externalizing and internalizing problems. The only significant predictor of child-reported depressive symptoms was the initial rating of how good the event was, in that adolescents who were higher on depressive symptoms reported lower initial positivity ratings of the event. These significant predictors (minimizing for internalizing and externalizing, and initial ratings for depressive symptoms) all are within the range of a medium effect size.

Discussion

Our results indicated that responses to positive events may be meaningful behaviors that are worth studying in young adolescents. The role of attributions with positive events has long been recognized to be important in understanding risk for depression (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman,

Table 4. Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Adolescents' Adjustment.

Predictors	Internalizing symptoms				Depressive symptoms				Externalizing symptoms						
	B	SE	df	t	Effect size	B	SE	df	t	Effect size	B	SE	Df	t	Effect size
Intercept	6.66	0.70	50	9.55***	.05	1.22	.21	37.3	5.71***	.01	5.50	0.68	50	8.04***	.25
Maximize	-0.27	0.80	50	-0.34	.36	0.02	.24	50.0	0.08	.18	-1.45	0.79	50	-1.84	.43
Minimize	2.65	0.97	50	2.73**	.18	0.38	.29	49.9	1.29	.09	3.19	0.95	50	3.35**	.12
Adaptive coping	-1.52	1.20	50	-1.27	.23	-0.23	.36	49.8	-0.62	.09	0.99	1.18	50	0.84	.16
Mal. coping	1.65	0.99	50	1.66	.04	0.20	.30	49.8	0.67	.37	-1.13	0.97	50	-1.16	.02
Initial event rating	-0.37	1.20	50	-0.30	.04	-1.01	.36	48.9	-2.80**		-0.14	1.18	50	-0.12	

Note: Mal. = maladaptive coping; B = unstandardized estimates.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

1986; Seligman et al., 1984), but our study adds to an emerging literature on a wider range of responses to positive events in youth. In line with the hypotheses and comparable research with adults, maximizing responses predicted more sustained positive feelings about the positive event, and minimizing responses were associated with both higher levels of internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems in adolescents.

First, as expected, maximizing responses predicted more of an increase in positive affect about the event across approximately 1 week. This finding indicates that adolescents may incur direct emotional benefits (i.e., sustained positive affect) from maximizing, which is consistent with research on adults (Gable et al., 2004; Langston, 1994; Reis et al., 2010). Critically, the effect of maximizing was apparent when accounting for adolescents' initial positive emotional reaction, indicating that maximizing predicted greater change in the positive direction regardless of initial ratings. As outlined in the broaden and build theory, positive affect can have important consequences, such as enabling people to broaden their cognition and actions and to build social resources (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001). Although we did not assess other effects of these maximizing responses, it is possible that adolescents' sharing of the positive events with another person resulted in beneficial effects on their relationship with that person, especially if the person responded enthusiastically (Reis et al., 2010). Overall, our finding is promising as it directly mirrors the pattern that has previously been reported for adults. Inferences about causality are precluded, however, because of the correlational design. In other words, it is equally plausible that events that result in protracted positive affect also may be the types of events where maximizing responses more frequently occur.

We also hypothesized that responses to positive events, even when accounting for coping to negative events, would relate to adolescents' adjustment. The hypothesis was partially supported for minimizing responses. Specifically, minimizing responses to positive events were associated with internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems over and above coping with negative events. The association between minimizing and internalizing problems is consistent with the earlier literature linking maladaptive attributions about positive events (as external, specific, and unstable) to depressive symptoms in children (e.g., Gladstone & Kaslow, 1995). However, it is unclear why minimizing responses to positive events were unrelated to adolescents' reports of their depressive symptoms. One potentially important distinction between earlier attribution research and this study is that in attribution measures, such as the Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire (Revised version; Kaslow & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991), the positive events are largely dependent on children's behavior (e.g., you get an "A" on a test; you make a new friend). In contrast, the events from our study could be whatever produced the most

positive emotional response across the 4 days, which were not necessarily controllable events for which the adolescents should realistically take credit. Therefore, one consideration for future research is that minimizing responses might show a stronger relation to depressive symptoms when the positive events are dependent upon adolescents' behavior, and downplaying the events' significance and likelihood to last or recur may hold greater significance.

With regard to externalizing, results indicated that adolescents who did more minimizing of their positive event were reported by a parent to exhibit more externalizing problems. This finding advances the current understanding of factors related to externalizing in youth. The association between minimizing responses and externalizing behaviors is in line with studies linking poor management of positive emotions to children's engagement in externalizing behaviors (Downey, Johnston, Hansen, Birney, & Stough, 2010; Rydell, Berlin, & Bohlin, 2003). The relationship between minimizing and externalizing remained when controlling for coping with negative events, suggesting a unique contribution of minimizing positive events. In our analytic approach, we also controlled for adolescents' initial rating of how good the event was, which enabled us to isolate the effect of the event from the later regulatory responses to the event and emotions. This is important because past research has indicated that positive events can have a buffering effect on children's adjustment. For example, children's exposure to a greater number of negative life events was related to more externalizing problems for youth with fewer positive life events but not for those with a high number of positive events (Wilcox Doyle, Wolchik, Dawson-McClure, & Sandler, 2003). Also, for children with less social support, children's experience of a greater number of positive events was related to fewer externalizing problems (Jackson & Warren, 2000). Thus a strength of our study is that we accounted for the fact that youth with behavioral problems might have less extreme positive events.

This study is one of the first to examine the relation between reactions to positive events and adjustment in early adolescence. The examination of responses to positive events may be especially important within this 10- to 14-year-old age group. Rates of depression increase during adolescence, particularly between 15 and 18 years of age (Hankin et al., 1998). Even though we did not find a relation between minimizing and depressive symptoms in this study, we did find that adolescents endorsing higher levels of depressive symptoms had rated their events as less positive in their daily reports. This pattern of appraising positive life events as less positive may be a sign of anhedonia, which is a key symptom of depression, and exhibiting it during early adolescence may increase susceptibility to depression in adulthood (Forbes & Dahl, 2005; Wilcox & Anthony, 2004). In a recent study, 10- to 12-year-old youth who experienced fewer positive events, but who had a more positive

attribution style, had lower levels of depressive symptoms than did children who had a comparable number of positive events but with a more negative attribution style (Vines & Nixon, 2009). In other words, there may be youth for whom it is particularly important that they develop more adaptive responses to positive events because they experience a relatively low number of positive events in their lives. Accumulating research also suggests that people incur health benefits from experiencing positive affect (Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Xu & Roberts, 2010). Therefore, the early adolescence period may be an especially important time to teach youth adaptive responses to positive events, which may have protective effects for their emotional and physical health as they advance further into adolescence.

Another consideration of this research is that these types of maximizing responses (or savoring and capitalizing) are generally viewed as adaptive in part because these responses help to maintain positive affect. However, there may be situations when enhancing positive affect may not aid in one's current goals (Tamir, 2009). In addition, as shown with adult samples, prioritizing happiness to a high degree may actually be associated with more negative outcomes, such as depressive symptoms and loneliness, when individuals are under lower life stress (Mauss, Savino, et al., 2011; Mauss, Tamir, Anderson, & Savino, 2011). Future research also could investigate nonlinear associations. For instance, there likely are limits on the level that adolescents should maximize (e.g., at what point does sharing become bragging?). Also, there may be a subset of exuberant children with high levels of positive affect and approach behavior (Degnan et al., 2011; Putnam & Stifter, 2005), who perhaps should not be encouraged to further maximize their levels of positive emotion.

There were both strengths and limitations of our design choices. Importantly, the design resulted in ecological validity because participants were reporting events from their own lives. Moreover, we attempted to select a more intense and meaningful event whereby adolescents' responses would be more memorable and consequential to them. The timing of assessments also allowed us to isolate initial levels of positive reactions to the event from later feelings toward the event. However, the reliance on reports from a single event leaves us open to unique event-specific influences. Clearly, a next step with this research is to develop a more reliable and comprehensive measure that could tap into adolescents' responses to positive events across a range of situations. Observational data could be valuable to help determine the time course of these responses, which may occur immediately as the event unfolds (Bryant et al., 2011), especially in the case of minimizing responses. As noted with emotion regulation research more generally (e.g., Campos, Frankel, & Camras, 2004; Gross & Feldman Barrett, 2011), teasing apart emotion from its regulation is challenging at best.

Additional limitations of the study include the small sample of adolescents who were followed for a brief period of time. Although our study found significant effects that were medium in magnitude, it was underpowered to detect small effects. For instance, contrary to hypotheses, we did not find that less maximizing was associated with any negative outcomes. Langston (1994) noted a similar pattern in his studies where capitalizing predicted greater positive affect but not less negative affect. Yet perhaps with a larger sample, at least one of our small effects (i.e., the result for maximizing and externalizing) may have reached significance. Future investigations also would be strengthened by using a longer assessment period and perhaps targeting data collection when adolescents might be experiencing a high number of positive events (e.g., summer camps, vacations). Our parent sample was limited to two fathers, which did not allow us to test if fathers' reports of child symptoms differed from mothers'. Additionally, because some measures had few items and modest reliability (e.g., the minimizing scale), our findings should be interpreted cautiously and replicated using a more comprehensive measurement approach. Finally, although our sample did include a portion of minority adolescents, we were not able to examine cultural differences. Prior work has shown that East Asian and North American individuals may engage in different amounts and types of savoring, with East Asians reporting higher levels of strategies that minimize or dampen positive affect (Lindberg, 2004, as cited in Bryant & Veroff, 2007). In addition, a wider range of positive emotions would be useful to include in future research given that Asian or Asian American youth may prefer and value low arousal emotions (e.g., calm) more than European American youth (Tsai, Louie, Chen, & Uchida, 2007). Positive events also are differentially impactful for Asian Americans and Asian adults (Oishi, Diener, Choi, Kim-Prieto, & Choi, 2007), indicating that future studies could examine how culture moderates the association between adolescents' responses to positive events and adjustment.

Despite these limitations, our findings provide new information particularly with regard to maximizing strategies and how minimizing is linked to adjustment in young adolescents. Results indicated that it is these responses, rather than the events themselves, that are the source of influence in our study. These findings may be useful toward efforts aimed at teaching youth to respond more adaptively to positive events and emotions, which is consistent with the successful Penn Resiliency Program (e.g., Gillham, Reivich, Jaycox, & Seligman, 1995; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). Finally, our study provides several directions for future research and suggests that a more comprehensive understanding of responses to positive events and their implications is still needed.

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