

# [PURM] Workplace Connectedness in the COVID-19 Age: improving work relationships in a remote setting

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## Abstract

Interpersonal connection is an integral aspect of teamwork, essential to daily clinical, business and educational functions. Previous studies have found revealing emotion or shared experiences in compassion building exercises can help establish connectedness and improve relationships between team members. Examples include meditation techniques such as Compassion Focused Therapy and Loving-Kind Meditation, in which participants engage in long term exercises and their interpersonal interactions measured (Kok, Singer 2016) or engaging in intimate conversations. Many existing studies are more individual oriented, focusing on how self compassion and positive psychology can mitigate depression and negative psychology (Leaviss Uttley 2014).

Measures of connectedness tend to be self reported, including the Connectivity Index, IOS and other subjective ratings, as few of the studies employ physiological measures for synchrony (Noy, Levit-Binun 2015). Most outcomes have indicated that sharing emotions between individuals improves connectedness (Harmon-Hones 2011), which increases trust, effective communication and improves relationship quality essential to team functioning. Thus, interconnectedness is a pivotal element for further study in strengthening trust for team-oriented settings.



## Objectives and Hypothesis

The primary goal of our study is to create an application that measures whether revealing emotion or personal information can increase workplace connectedness between individuals of different backgrounds.

We hypothesize that revealing personal information with emotion will improve perceived connectedness between individuals. Our study design involved creating an application that displays slides with pictures of people from both genders and 4 ethnic groups, along with an associated sentence that conveyed biographical information.

## Methodology

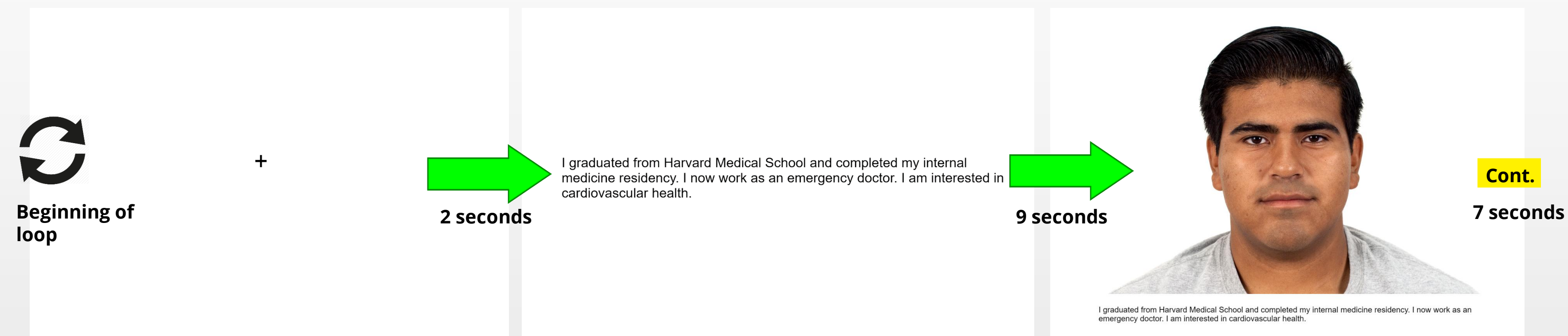
Before the experiment, participants are required to fill out a Qualtrics survey that collects their demographic information and personal interests. They are then assigned a uniquely generated number for identification and taken to the main experiment on Pavlovia.

We incorporated diverse pieces of personal information, from occupations, childhood facts and passions, and randomized all pairings of photos to sentences such that every race and gender has an equal chance of getting paired up with each sentence. Further, 50% of males will get either condition 1 or 2, and 50% females would get the other condition.

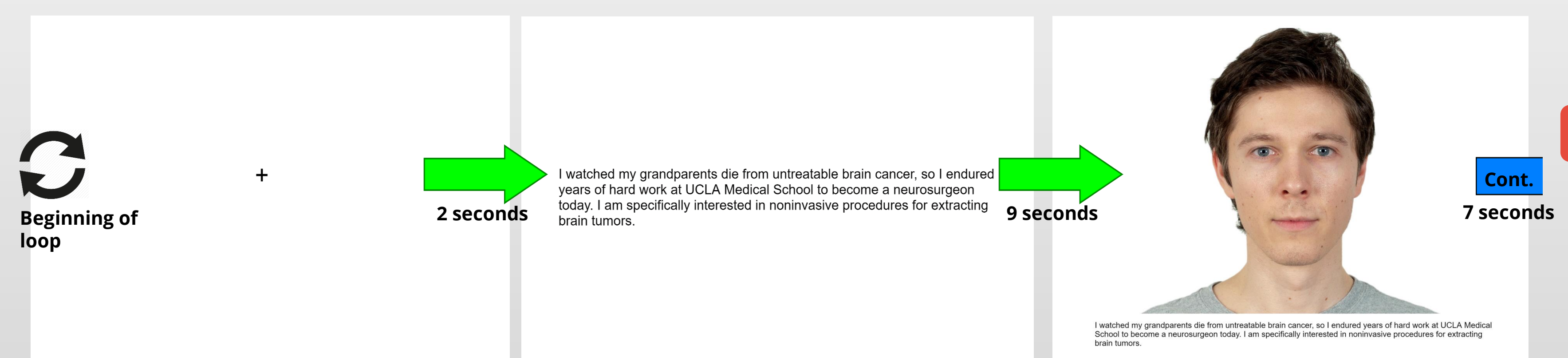
After examining the picture/sentence slide, participants then proceeded to rate how connected they felt with the individual displayed in the picture from a scale from 1 to 7, along with additional questions rating the picture's effect. We completed building the application on Psychopy using Python and made it online via Pavlovia using JavaScript, and have since moved towards smaller pilot studies.

## Experimental Design

### CONDITION 1: Descriptive information ONLY:



### CONDITION 2: With personal information and affective wording:



### Ratings of connectedness (using keyboard 1-7):

Overall, how connected do you feel to this person?

Extremely Disconnected	Moderately Disconnected	Slightly Disconnected	Neutral	Slightly Connected	Moderately Connected	Extremely Connected
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Cont. [Picture of a woman]

I watched my grandparents die from untreatable brain cancer, so I endured years of hard work at UCLA Medical School to become a neurosurgeon today. I am specifically interested in noninvasive procedures for extracting brain tumors.

## Variables and Conditions

### Sentences Conditions:

1. Descriptive Sentences, Neutral Wording
2. Personal Information, Affective Wording

### Sentences Content

- Education
- Occupations
- Professional Interests and Passions

### Pictures

- Duration: ~ 30 minutes
- Length: 32 Total Pictures (16 Male, 16 Female, 8 Asian, 8 Black, 8 LatinX, 8 White)

## Conclusion

We looked at how people could connect better with each other by means of revealing more personal and intimate details.

### During our study, we accomplished the following:

1. Identified experimental groups and conditions used in Psychology
2. Built an experimental platform with Python and Excel to collect responses
3. Presented experimental study design at lab meetings
4. Pilot Experimental trials with participants after IRB approval

This is an ongoing experiment, and the only data collected is preliminarily from the pilot studies.

The data is currently being analyzed using R and we hope to find significant differences between mean responses for different ethnic groups and demographics of respondents.

## Acknowledgements

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Ma, Correll, & Wittenbrink (2015). *The Chicago Face Database: A Free Stimulus Set of Faces and Norming Data. Behavior Research Methods, 47, 1122-1135.*

## Questions of Connectedness:

Overall, how connected do you feel to this person?

How well do you think you work together with this person?

How well do you think this person performs in their respective industry?

How well do you think this person can lead a team in their industry?

If you were to hire this person, what starting salary would you suggest?

Rating Scale: 1 to 7