Self-Presentations of Happiness: Sincere, Polite, or Cautious?

Sherri P. Pataki
Margaret S. Clark
Carnegie Mellon University

Two studies addressed the meaning of expressed happiness in social relationships. In the first study, men expected to interact with a socially desirable or a socially undesirable woman. It was predicted that (a) when about to meet a socially undesirable woman, men would display more happiness publicly than is felt privately and (b) when about to meet a socially desirable woman, men would display less happiness publicly than felt privately. Results supported the former and tended to support the latter prediction. In the second study, the authors predicted that women would mistrust men's expressions of happiness upon meeting them such that (a) unattractive women would suspect men of inflating happiness and (b) attractive women would suspect men of suppressing happiness. Results supported the former but not the latter hypothesis. Taking relationship-specific goals into account appears to be important in determining whether emotion will be accurately conveyed and can be trusted.

Keywords: emotion expression; happiness; attractiveness; trust; strategic self-presentation

Emotions as Cues to Social Interest

What cues can we use to infer that another person is pleased to have encountered us? One useful cue would seem to be the happiness that the other person exhibits, however subtle, upon encountering us. Writers have suggested this for years, as did Shakespeare in the play *Julius Caesar* when he had Brutus take leave of Cassius saying, "Forever, and forever, farewell, Cassius! If we do meet again, why, we shall smile; If not, why then, this parting was well made" (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 117-118, cited in Harrison, 1968) and Cassius responding with, "Forever and forever farewell Brutus! If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed; If not, 'tis true this parting was well made" (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 120-122, cited in Harrison, 1968). Scientists too have noted that expressions of happiness convey social interest and engagement. For instance,

across many cultures, women's flirtation gestures have been shown to include smiles (Perper & Weis, 1987) and men have been shown to respond to these expressions by approaching the women (Givens, 1978; Moore, 1985).

Moreover, the idea that conveyed happiness conveys social interest and approval fits well with many current appraisal theories of emotion; that is, many emotion theorists have emphasized that emotions arise from appraisals of the situations in which people find themselves (e.g., Lazarus, 1966; Mandler, 1975; Scherer, 1982; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Applying this to meeting us, the emotions the other person feels ought to capture that person's appraisal of having encountered us. If the person finds us to be pleasant, if our presence holds the person's attention, and if the person appraises our presence as facilitating his or her social interaction goals, that person ought to be happy (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Emotions, including happiness, when expressed are assumed to convey information about the expresser to relationship partners (Clark, Fitness, & Brissette, 2001; Fridlund, 1991; Jones, Collins, & Hong, 1991; Levenson, 1994; Miller & Leary, 1992). Indeed, many emotion theorists have emphasized the importance of being able to appraise the emotions of others for purposes of responding flexibly to changes in our social environments and for building supportive social net-

works (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mayer, 1999; Salovey, Woolery, & Mayer, 2001).

Masking Emotion

However, inferring social interest from the emotions others convey to us may not always be useful. Whereas expressed emotions can be a very rich source of information about others' appraisals of us, writers also have suggested for years that at times true emotions will be masked and others substituted. For instance, in Shakespeare's play *Troilus and Cressida*, Troilus describes concealing his lovesickness for Cressida from his brother and father as follows, "I have, as when the sun doth light a store, Buried this sigh in a wrinkle of a smile," explaining further that his sorrow "is couched in seeming gladness" (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 38-40, cited in Harrison, 1968). Emotion theorists agree that people often mask true emotions and strategically convey emotions they are not feeling (Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996; Ekman & Friesen, 1975) with developmentalists noting that we acquire this skill early in life (Denham & Grout, 1993; Gnepp & Hess, 1986; Saarni, 1999).

There are at least two classes of reasons why people may wish to mask emotions when interacting with others: self-protection and protecting others' feelings. Consider self-protection first. The emotions we feel internally are signals to ourselves of our own desires and needs (Frijda, 1993; Simon, 1967). The emotions we convey to others alert them to our needs and desires. Although this can be a good thing when others care for us, will respond to our needs, and will not exploit our vulnerabilities (Clark et al., 2001), letting others know our emotions also leaves us vulnerable to exploitation and hurt by those who do not care about our welfare. For instance, if we seem very happy upon meeting someone, we open ourselves up for public embarrassment and even humiliation if the person rejects us. In general, in any situation in which another has power to hurt us and we are not sure they care about our welfare, it may be best to keep our emotions under wraps. These are the situations in which we may strategically control our emotions to protect ourselves and/or to "save face" in potentially embarrassing situations (Goffman, 1967).

Consider next masking emotions to protect other people's feelings or, in Goffman's (1967) terms, with maintaining others' "faces." If others elicit negative feelings in us we may mask our emotions lest we hurt their feelings. For instance, if someone gives us an unappealing gift, we may mask our feelings of distress or disappointment, substituting happiness in its place lest we hurt their feelings or embarrass them (Harris, Donnelly, Guz, & Pitt-Watson, 1986; Saarni, 1984). It may also be the case that, in general, when we meet someone in whom we have little or no social interest, we mask our disappointment and may substitute mild happiness lest we hurt or embarrass that person. (Of course, to the extent to which not hurting other people's feelings is part of our own identity, saving others' faces simultaneously saves our own.)

Thinking in these ways led us to predict that the emotions people convey to relationship partners upon meeting them would be likely to be inaccurate indices of social interest in the following two types of social situations: (a) Any situation in which a person judges that he or she may be considerably happier to meet the person than the person is to meet him or her or (b) any situation in which a person judges that he or she is likely to be considerably less happy to meet the person than the person is to meet him or her. In the former case, the person's happiness (arising from the opportunity to interact with a desirable other) is likely to be masked to avert embarrassment in the event that the person's social interest (and accompanying happiness) is not reciprocated by the target person. In the latter case, the person's expressed happiness is likely to be elevated to avert unnecessarily hurting the other person's feelings (and perhaps, simultaneously, to avoid self-perceptions of social insensitivity).

In the present research, to operationalize a situation in which a person would suspect that he might be considerably happier to meet another person than she would be to meet him, men (unselected for their own attractiveness) were led to believe they were about to meet a particularly physically attractive and, being new to the area, presumably available woman. This, we hoped, would elicit happiness privately but also a desire to self-protectively mask that happiness in public. To operationalize a situation in which a person would suspect that he might be considerably less happy to meet another person than she would be to meet him, men (again unselected for their own attractiveness) were led to believe they were about to meet a particularly unattractive, and given an apparent lack of current social ties, presumably socially unskilled woman. This, we hoped, would elicit unhappiness privately but also a desire to mask that unhappiness in public lest the woman's feelings be hurt. We then assessed the men's privately versus publicly conveyed happiness.

Why the Physical Attractiveness of a Potential Partner (Relative to the Self) May Influence Masking Emotions

A long history of research in social psychology suggests that physical attractiveness, particularly the physical attractiveness of women, is a potent determinant of social interest in initial encounters. People associate beautiful others with achievement, friendliness, compe-

tence, and success (Dion, Berschied, & Walster, 1972; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Jackson, Hunter, & Hodge, 1995; Wheeler & Kim, 1997), and indeed, interactions with attractive others are often more socially rewarding than interactions with others (Feingold, 1992; Goldman & Lewis, 1977; Reis et al., 1982; Umberson & Hughes, 1987), in part because our expectations can influence the reality of the situation (Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977). Moreover, merely being associated with an attractive other may cause observers to judge us more positively, at least if we are women (Bar-Tal & Saxe, 1976; Sigall & Landy, 1973). Thus, people, especially men, are likely to desire relationships with attractive others (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1974; Feingold, 1990; Green, Buchanan, & Muir, 1984; Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottman, 1966). Based on this reasoning, we would expect men to feel happy upon having the opportunity to interact with an attractive woman. In contrast, the work just cited also suggests that men have much less positive views of unattractive women, do not expect interactions with them to be rewarding, and do not expect to be judged positively when they are seen with unattractive women. Thus, we would expect men to be less happy when facing interactions with an unattractive woman.

However, will men actually openly convey the emotions they feel when they find they are about to interact with a particularly attractive or a particularly unattractive female partner? We thought not. These situations exemplify just the sort of situations we mentioned above in which social interest is likely to be uneven and in which emotion is likely to be masked either for self-protection or to protect the woman's feelings. Specifically, we would expect that in a situation in which a man is about to interact with an attractive woman (especially one more attractive than he) that he will feel happy but will mask those feelings lest he be publicly embarrassed or humiliated should the woman reject him. We would expect that in a situation in which a man is about to interact with an unattractive woman (especially one less attractive than himself) that he will inflate happiness lest he hurt her feelings (and perhaps perceive himself as insensitive or unkind).

Specific Hypotheses About Conveying Emotions to Others

Our first hypothesis was that men would feel happier when about to meet a physically attractive, available woman than when about to meet a physically unattractive woman who has met with little social success and that they would report these feelings in private. Our second hypothesis was that people meeting an unattractive woman for the first time would inflate feelings of happi-

ness when reports of feelings would be publicly available to the partner. Our third hypothesis was that men who are meeting an attractive partner for the first time will suppress feelings of happiness when reports of those feelings would be publicly available to the woman. These three hypotheses were tested in Study 1 in which male participants were led to believe that they would be meeting an attractive or an unattractive woman and in which self-reports of how they were feeling in general could or could not be seen by the partner. (We reserved tests of attractive and unattractive women's awareness of these strategies for Study 2).

STUDY 1

Method

OVERVIEW

Male college students were led to believe that they would receive background information about a female participant, including a picture, fill out an impression form, and then meet the woman for a brief conversation. Afterward, they expected to complete the session by filling out a second impression form. After filling out their initial background information, participants received a picture of an unattractive woman who was described as anxious to meet people as a result of not having met many people in her first semester or an attractive woman who was anxious to meet people because she had just transferred to the university. Each participant filled out an impression form regarding this woman along with a form indicating his own current mood. In a private expression condition, participants were told that their mood ratings would be kept confidential. In a public condition, participants were told that their mood ratings would be seen by the female participant. Participant ratings of happiness and contentment constituted the primary dependent measures.

PARTICIPANTS

Male participants were recruited for a study on forming first impressions of a member of the opposite sex. Sixty-four male students responded and participated. Each received either experimental credit toward fulfillment of a class requirement or $5 for participating. Four participants suspected that there was not another student participating in the experiment. (All had been in a prior study in which they had been falsely led to believe that they would interact with another person.) Data from these students were excluded from all analyses. The data from a fifth person was also excluded because he left the room during the experiment.

MATERIALS

Photographs. Two Polaroid photographs of female students were used in this study. They were chosen from a set of five pictures taken at another university. The individuals in these pictures had granted us permission to take and to use their photographs as target pictures. Prior to the experiment, five judges rated the attractiveness of each photographed woman on a scale ranging from 1 (*unattractive*) to 7 (*attractive*). We averaged the judges' ratings and used the pictures with the lowest ($M = 2.4$) and the highest ($M = 4.8$) attractiveness ratings as stimuli. A *t* test revealed that the attractiveness ratings of the attractive photograph were significantly higher than those of the unattractive photograph, $t(8) = -5.37$, $p < .01$.

PROCEDURE

Participants were greeted by the experimenter and taken to a room containing several comfortable chairs and a coffee table. There were two folders on the coffee table. One folder was labeled "Background Information." The other folder was labeled "Confidential." The experimenter asked the participant to make himself comfortable and stated that she would be back in a minute or two. She then left the room and closed the door.

After several minutes, the experimenter returned to the room, introduced herself, and reminded the participant that the experiment was about impression formation and that the sign-up sheet had asked for men only. She then explained that there was a second sign-up sheet for women. The experimenter continued, saying that using names from these two separate sheets, she had paired two students for the session. She stated that the female partner for this session was "Lisa Bremmer" and that because the study was on first impressions, she needed to make sure that they did not know each other already. All participants indicated that they did not know Lisa Bremmer.

The experimenter explained that the participants would begin by exchanging some background information and she asked the participant if she could take a Polaroid picture of him. All participants agreed. After taking the picture, she handed the participant a folder containing the instructions for the experiment and asked him to read through them while she left the room for a few minutes.

The instructions stated that the participants would do the following: (a) complete a background information sheet that would be exchanged with their pictures; (b) indicate their current moods by completing a mood form which, the instructions made clear, would be either kept confidential (*private* condition) or exchanged with their background information (*public* condition); (c) fill out a form indicating their first impression of the other person; (d) meet for 10 minutes and have a free discussion; and (e) be separated again to fill out a second impression form and a questionnaire indicating how they went about forming their impressions.

After a few minutes, the experimenter returned and asked if the participant had any questions. She then gave him a folder containing Lisa's picture and her completed background information form. The background information form asked each participant to indicate his name, age, hometown, college, major, and hobbies. Each participant also indicated on 5-point scales whether he considered himself to be musically talented, well read, athletic, and people oriented. Participants also were asked why they had selected this particular study. At the bottom of the form, participants were instructed to put their form in the background information folder upon completion.

In the desirable characteristics condition, the other participant's folder contained a picture of the attractive woman. The background information form indicated that she had signed up for the experiment because she just transferred here as a second semester freshman and she thought it might be interesting to meet new people. In the undesirable characteristics condition, the folder contained a picture of the unattractive woman. The background information form indicated that she had signed up for the experiment because, although she had been at school for more than a semester, she still felt that she needed to meet some new people. We assumed that the attractive woman who was new to the school would be seen as socially desirable and available for new relationships simply due to being new at the school. We assumed that the unattractive woman who had been at the school for awhile would be seen as socially undesirable and available for new relationships due to a lack of past social success.

The experimenter asked the participant to look through Lisa's background information and then to fill out the first impression form. The first impression form asked participants to rate the other person on a series of personality traits (i.e., considerate, friendly, intelligent, kind, insincere, closed-minded, sympathetic, understanding, unpleasant, and likable). The scales ranged from 1 (*not especially appropriate*) to 7 (*especially appropriate*). Participants also were asked to rate the attractiveness of the person on a scale ranging from 1 (*not especially attractive*) to 7 (*very attractive*). At the bottom of the form, participants were instructed to place the form in the confidential folder. After giving the participant this form, the experimenter stated that she would go get the participant's background information sheet and mood form. Then she left the room.

The experimenter returned after a few minutes and gave the participant a background sheet and mood form

to complete. The mood form asked participants to indicate how they were feeling by filling out a scale ranging from –3 (*not at all*) to +3 (*extremely*) for the following six emotions: angry, happy, sad, irritable, content, and depressed. Ratings of "happy" and "content" constituted our primary dependent measure, that is, our measure of happiness. (We suspected that ratings of "sad" and "depressed" might fall in the mirror image of ratings of "happy" and "content." "Irritable" and "angry" were included as filler items.)

In the public condition, participants were instructed to put the form in the background information folder to be exchanged with the other participant. In the private condition, participants were instructed to put the form in the confidential folder. It should be noted that to avoid suspicion and demand, participants were not asked to indicate their emotional reaction to the female partner per se but rather just to rate their current mood after having received all instructions and having seen her background information and picture. Our instructions implied that mood was something that could affect first impressions and ought to be controlled in analyses rather than implying that first impressions could influence moods.

The experimenter left the room for a few minutes to give the participant time to complete the background and mood forms. After returning, she checked for suspicion by telling him that there really was more to the study than she had explained. Then she asked if he had any idea what it was. Finally, she told the participant that the experiment was over and she debriefed him regarding the true purpose of the experiment, including the fact that there was not, in fact, another participant present.

Results

Manipulation check. As a manipulation check on the perceived attractiveness of the other, we used participants' own ratings of the attractiveness of their female partner on the 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) that had appeared on the first impression form. As expected, participants who were given the photograph of the attractive woman rated her attractiveness as being significantly higher (desirable condition, $M = 5.0$) than participants who were given the photograph of the unattractive woman (undesirable condition, $M = 3.2$), $t(57) = 6.76$, $p < .001$.

On the first impression form, participants also were asked to rate how likeable they perceived their female partner to be on a 7-point scale with higher numbers indicating greater likeability. As expected, men in the desirable condition rated their partners as significantly more likeable ($M = 5.8$) than did those in the undesirable condition ($M = 5.3$), $t(57) = 2.17$, $p < .05$.

TABLE 1: Happiness Expressed in Public Versus Private by Men About to Meet an Unattractive Versus an Attractive Woman

	Unattractive Target	*Attractive Target*
Public	2.2	2.4
Private	0.1	2.8

NOTE: Scores could range from –6 to +6. Higher numbers indicate greater happiness.

Emotional expression. The primary dependent measure in this study was each participant's happiness score (rating of happiness plus rating of contentment) on the mood form they filled out while anticipating an interaction with another participant, with a secondary measure for exploratory analysis being their sadness score (rating of sadness plus rating of depression). We examined the pattern of these results to determine whether, as expected, participants expecting to meet the unattractive woman expressed more happiness when they were told the woman would see their mood form (public condition) than when told that this information was confidential (private condition). We further examined the pattern to determine whether, as expected, participants expecting to meet the attractive woman suppressed expressions of happiness when they were told the woman would see their mood form (public condition) than when told that this information was confidential (private condition).

The means for expressed happiness in each condition are shown in Table 1. As can be seen and as predicted, when emotion was expressed privately, participants did report feeling better when they anticipated interacting with an attractive woman ($M = 2.8$) than when anticipating interacting with an unattractive woman ($M = 0.1$). As also can be seen and as predicted, when participants believed they would be interacting with an unattractive woman, they did express significantly more happiness when they were told she would see their mood form (public condition, $M = 2.2$) than when they were told that this information was to be kept confidential (private condition, $M = 0.1$). In contrast and also as shown in Table 1, this pattern of results did not hold true for male participants who believed they would be meeting an attractive woman (public condition, $M = 2.4$, private condition $M = 2.8$). Instead, these participants tended to express less happiness in public than they expressed privately.

These results were analyzed with a 2×2 analysis of variance. The predicted interaction between the public/private condition and the desirable/undesirable characteristics condition was marginally significant,

$F(1, 55) = 3.7$, $p < .06$. A planned comparison between the public and private conditions for the unattractive target indicated that, as expected, these means were significantly different, $F(1, 57) = 5.2$, $p < .05$. A similar planned comparison between the public and private conditions for the attractive target was nonsignificant, $F(1, 57) = .19$, *ns.*

In two ways, the pattern of results for sadness mirrored the results for happiness. First, participants privately reported more sadness when they believed they were going to meet an unattractive woman ($M = -1.8$) than when they believed they were going to meet an attractive woman ($M = -2.7$). Second, participants who were about to meet the unattractive female participants reported less sadness if they had been led to believe their reports would be made public ($M = -3.3$) than if they had been led to believe their reports would be kept private ($M = -1.8$). It was also the case that participants who believed they were about to meet the attractive woman reported less sadness if those reports would be public ($M = -3.7$) than if they believed those reports would be kept private ($M = -2.7$), a result that did not mirror the results for self-reported happiness. The predicted interaction was not significant, $F(1, 55) = .10$, *ns*, however, the main effect for the public/private condition approached significance, $F(1, 55) = 2.7$, $p = .10$, suggesting that regardless of with whom the men anticipated meeting, participants tended to express less sadness publicly than in private. None of the planned comparisons were significant.[1]

Discussion

We had predicted that people would feel better upon finding out they were about to meet a physically attractive, presumably socially skilled person relative to what they would report feeling upon finding out they were about to meet a physically unattractive, presumably less socially skilled person. The results of the first experiment clearly supported this hypothesis. Even though we did not ask our participants how they felt about meeting the attractive (or unattractive) person per se but rather about how they felt generally (having been given instructions for the research session and having seen a photograph of their partner), in private our participants reported feeling better when about to meet an attractive woman than when about to meet an unattractive woman. This result fits well with the now large body of research suggesting that people hold more positive opinions of physically attractive than of physically unattractive others, as well as literature suggesting that interactions with such people will be more pleasant than interactions with unattractive people.

Of most interest to us were tests of how privately reported happiness would be modified under conditions in which persons experiencing the emotion knew their potential partner would become aware of how they were feeling. In private, participants assigned to interact with the unattractive person reported being significantly less happy than participants assigned to interact with the attractive person. Yet, when reported feelings would be made public, as predicted, participants inflated expressions of happiness to the unattractive target, whereas participants tended to suppress expressions of happiness to the attractive target. We believe this significant inflation of expressions of happiness to the unattractive target occurred out of motivation to protect the other's feelings (and, as a consequence, to think well of oneself). We do not believe that inflating the positivity of one's self-reported feelings in such circumstances is necessarily conscious (although it may be). Such reactions may be so well learned and practiced that they have become quite automatic and unconscious.

Are recipients of emotional expressions aware of other's tendencies to present emotions in a way biased by the recipient's attractiveness? Having found evidence that men do present themselves as feeling better when about to meet a socially attractive woman than when about to meet a socially unattractive woman, we next addressed the question of whether people's own attractiveness moderates their trust in other's expressed emotions. We hypothesized that it would.

Lewarning about suppressing negative emotions and replacing them with positive emotions to protect others' feelings is something attractive and unattractive people alike learn early in childhood (Harris, 1989, 1994). Moreover, people are presumably quite aware of their own general level of attractiveness and, by adulthood, people are adept at taking others' perspectives and consequently presumably adept at guessing others' initial reactions to their physical appearance. As a result, we predicted that unattractive women would suspect men who express happiness to them of expressing more happiness than they truly feel. We were more tentative about the judgments of attractive women. We predicted that they would either (a) believe that men would express their true felt levels of happiness or (b) given the men's tendency to suppress felt happiness to attractive women observed in Study 1, that they might suspect men of suppressing felt happiness.

These predictions were tested in our second study. In this study, women were simply approached, asked to imagine meeting a man, and then to rate both how much happiness that man would feel upon meeting them and also how much happiness that man would openly ex-

press upon meeting them. Afterward, the experimenter asked permission to take their photograph to associate appearances with survey answers.

STUDY 2

Method

OVERVIEW

Female participants were asked to imagine themselves meeting a fairly attractive male student for the first time and to indicate (a) how much happiness the other would feel upon meeting them and (b) how much happiness the other would be likely to express upon meeting them. Afterward, their own physical attractiveness was assessed and correlated with their own ratings on these measures.

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 15 female university undergraduates completed the survey and allowed the experimenter to take their picture. Participants were recruited from various public places on campus or in the psychology department after they had completed a survey for another study.

PROCEDURE

Participants were asked if they were undergraduates and, if so, would they be willing to complete a quick survey for a study in the psychology department. None of the participants were aware that the experimenter wanted a photograph or that they would be paid until they completed the survey.

The survey asked participants to imagine themselves meeting with a fairly attractive male lab partner for the first time. Participants were asked how much happiness the lab partner would express and how much happiness the lab partner would really feel when he meets them. Both scales ranged from 1 (*very little*) to 7 (*a lot*). Analogous questions were asked for sadness.

After completing the survey, participants were asked if the experimenter could take their photograph and collect some general background information such as age and major and were told that they would be paid for their participation. All participants agreed to complete the study. After having their picture taken, participants were debriefed and thanked.

Three male judges rated the attractiveness of the participants on a scale ranging from 1 (*unattractive*) to 7 (*attractive*). These three ratings were highly correlated ($\alpha = .85$) so we used the judges' average rating of attractiveness as a measure of each participant's attractiveness. The mean attractiveness rating was 3.71, with sufficient

TABLE 2: Unattractive and Attractive Women's Judgments of How Much Happiness Men Would Feel in Private and Express in Public Upon Meeting Them

	Unattractive Participants	*Attractive Participants*
Expected expressed happiness	5.3	4.3
Expected privately felt happiness	4.0	4.4

NOTE: Scores could range from 1 to 7. Higher numbers indicate greater perceived happiness.

variance to enable us to do meaningful analyses based on participant attractiveness (min = 1.33, max = 6.00, *SD* = 1.45).

Results

Analyses mirroring those of Study 1. To parallel the results obtained in Study 1, we divided our participants into an attractive and an unattractive condition as equal as possible in number based on our attractiveness measure. We then calculated the mean expected feelings of happiness in a potential partner (private condition) and the mean expected conveyed happiness from the potential partner (public condition). These means appear in Table 2.

An examination of means reveals that the pattern obtained is close to that shown in Study 1; that is, unattractive women did feel that others would be less happy upon finding out they would be meeting them ($M = 4.0$) than did attractive women ($M = 4.4$). In addition, unattractive women did expect that men would inflate their expressions of happiness in public ($M = 5.3$) relative to what they really felt in private ($M = 4.0$), whereas attractive women expected that men would convey their true happiness in public ($M = 4.3$) relative to what they really felt in private ($M = 4.4$).

A mixed 2×2 analysis of variance revealed the expected two-way interaction between participant attractiveness and the visibility of the emotion, $F(1, 13) = 5.76$, $p < .05$. A planned comparison between the public and private conditions for the unattractive participants indicated that those means were significantly different, $t(7) = 2.76$, $p < .05$. A planned comparison between the public and private conditions for the attractive participants was nonsignificant, $t(6) = -.42$, *ns*, as was a planned comparison between the unattractive/private and attractive/private conditions, $t(13) = -.67$, *ns*.[2]

The analyses of variance and comparisons just reported placed participants into two broad groups—attractive or unattractive. This, of course, allows us to present the results in a manner analogous to the results from Study 1, but it does not take full advantage of all the information about attractiveness that we had. Thus, we

calculated an "inflation/suppression" score for each participant by computing the difference between the happiness she expected the other to express and the happiness she expected the other to feel (i.e., expressed happiness–felt happiness). A negative score on this measure indicated that the participant expected the man would express less happiness than he truly felt. A positive score indicated the participant expected the man would express more happiness than he truly felt. A score of zero indicated that the person was believed to have expressed the same amount of happiness he felt. As expected, there was a negative correlation between a person's attractiveness and this score, $r(15) = -.67$, $p < .01$, indicating the more attractive the participant the more likely she was to believe the other would suppress his happiness and the less attractive the participant the more likely she was to believe the other would inflate his happiness.

Discussion

The results of Study 2 provide evidence that people who differ in levels of physical attractiveness are likely to interpret others' happiness during first encounters in different ways. Those who are unattractive reported that they would significantly discount a man's expressed happiness, whereas those who are attractive tended to believe men would convey their true feelings of happiness. We believe those who are unattractive discount other's expressed happiness because they are aware that others often do not feel particularly happy about the opportunity to interact with them but that others often try to hide their disappointment so as not to hurt their feelings. The results for the attractive participants, however, suggest that they are more likely to trust that men are expressing their true feelings of happiness about meeting them. Their estimates of the happiness men would feel and would express were nearly identical. This study yielded no clear evidence of attractive women believing that the men would suppress felt happiness. Even so, we urge caution in dismissing the possibility of attractive women believing that men suppress truly felt happiness upon encountering them. In Study 1, in which a slight tendency toward men suppressing happiness in public to attractive women was observed, the target woman had been specifically selected to be highly attractive. In contrast, the attractive group of women in Study 2 consisted of any woman above the median on attractiveness in our sample. Perhaps women especially high in attractiveness will suspect men of suppressing some happiness upon meeting them. That possibility must await further research.

An alternative explanation for Study 2. The results of this survey provide evidence that unattractive individuals

do tend to discount others' happiness; however, further research is needed to determine exactly why. Although it is likely that unattractive individuals are aware of the norm to be kind, it is also plausible that individual differences correlated with low physical attractiveness may play a role. For example, unattractive individuals may have lower self-esteem than do those who are more attractive. Consequently, they may be more likely to think such thoughts as "I'm not that desirable, the other could not possibly be happy about meeting me" and this, *rather* than awareness of a general social norm not to judge people based on appearance, may have driven the results. An analogous self-esteem interpretation also might account for attractive participants' tendency to believe that men would express their true happiness. Because we do not have individual difference measures of self-esteem for participants in this study, we cannot rule out this possibility. Arguing against a self-esteem interpretation, however, is research suggesting that the relationship between attractiveness and self-esteem is weak and inconsistent at best (Feingold, 1992; Major, Carrington, & Carnevale, 1984; Mathes & Kahn, 1975).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We began this article by posing the question, "What cues might people use to assess others' social interest in them?" Experienced emotions, we noted, sum up people's appraisal of the situations in which they find themselves. Given that, we noted that the emotions people reveal to us upon meeting us often should provide us with information relevant to their social interest in us. Indeed, those who have written about "emotional intelligence" have emphasized that for social interaction to be optimally adaptive, individuals must appraise the emotions of others accurately. Those who can do so, they assert, will be best able to "respond flexibly to changes in their social environments and build supportive social networks" (Salovey et al., 2001, p. 282). Such theorists quite reasonably have focused on individual differences in people's "skill" at decoding others' emotions, suggesting that differences in people's ability to accurately read others' emotions lie in the eye of the beholder (Buck, 1976; Campbell, Kagan, & Krathwohl, 1971; Mayer, DiPaolo, & Salovey, 1990). We have no doubt that there are individual differences in people's attention to others' emotions and in their ability to effectively decode emotional cues once they do attend to such cues that do indeed "lie in the eye of the beholder."

Emotion researchers also have emphasized that people vary in their chronic tendencies to accurately recognize their own emotions and express them to others (Salovey et al., 2001). But does all the variance in effective emotional communication between people lie

within individuals? Are their abilities to express emotions and to read emotions all that matter?

The present work makes a general point we believe to be quite important. It is that difficulties in emotional communication may often lie in the very nature of the relationship between the person who experiences emotion (and may or may not choose to accurately convey it) and the person who is interacting with that person (who may or may not suspect the particular other of expressing emotion inaccurately given the person's relationship to the other.)

How the nature of a dyad may influence the veracity of affective cues to social interest. Here we have argued that any time a person experiencing an emotion believes it is best not to convey that emotion to another person because it might either (a) hurt that other person's feelings or (b) increase his or her personal vulnerability to embarrassment or hurt, emotion is likely to be masked. Our first study demonstrated the former effect clearly. Men about to meet an unattractive woman were not particularly happy. Yet, they masked those feelings and significantly inflated the amount of happiness they reported feeling. Our first study also provided at least a hint of the latter effect. Men about to meet an attractive woman did feel happy, yet they tended to suppress their happiness. We also have argued that members of groups who are likely to have frequently been targets of inflated happiness or suppressed happiness are likely to suspect the veracity of others' expressed happiness. We obtained clear evidence of this in Study 2, in which women low in attractiveness reported that they would suspect a man who expressed happiness to them was expressing more happiness than he truly felt.

Other likely targets of inflated expressed happiness. Unattractive women are unlikely to be the only targets of inflated expressed happiness. Expressed happiness may be routinely inflated (and routinely discounted by targets) during any initial interaction in which (a) the target belongs to a stigmatized group (e.g., racial minorities, disabled persons), (b) the person expressing emotion does not belong to this group, and (c) there are widely shared cultural norms that people should not treat members of the stigmatized group poorly. What happens in such situations, we suspect, is that people become more mindful and more carefully monitor the situation and their own behavior (Frable, Blackstone, & Scherbaum, 1990) and simultaneously targets become more likely to discount the expresser's happiness.

Some recent results from our laboratory support the generalizability of our findings beyond interactions between people differing in physical attractiveness. Specifically, we recently worked with an honor's undergraduate student who presented college students with a vignette describing interactions between two White students, two Black students, or a combination of a White and a Black student. All supposedly had just discovered that they had been assigned to share a room at college. A dialogue including expressions of happiness was included in the vignette and participants indicated whether they trusted the expressions of happiness. As predicted, trust that the expressed happiness was real was greatest when a White student expressed happiness to another White student and when a Black student expressed happiness to another Black student. It dropped significantly when expressions of happiness took place across racial lines (Pierre, 2003).

Future studies are needed to determine the extent to which people do strategically present happiness to targeted outgroups, under what circumstances this inflation of happiness is most likely to occur, and under what circumstances recipients of expressed happiness will be most wary. An unfortunate irony of these situations is that whereas public expressions of happiness may be well intended, the mistrust with which they are likely to be greeted will undermine the good intentions.

NOTES

1. Although we had included "angry" and "irritable" as filler items, we analyzed ratings on these measures as well. The main effects for the public/private condition, $F(1, 55) = .08$, the desirable/undesirable condition, $F(1, 55) = .14$, and the interaction, $F(1, 55) = .04$, were all nonsignificant.

2. A mixed 2×2 analysis of variance indicated the interaction between the public/private and attractive/unattractive conditions was nonsignificant for sadness, $F(1, 13) = .92$, *ns.* Consistent with Study 1, however, the main effect for public versus private approached significance for sadness, $F(1, 13) = 3.57$, $p < .10$, such that regardless of their own attractiveness, women expected male students to express less sadness in public than they privately felt.

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