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We Should Focus on Interpersonal as Well as Intrapersonal Processes in Our Search for How Affect Influences Judgments and Behavior

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Over the past 30 years a large and impressive literature has appeared documenting the effects of our moods and emotions on our social judgments and behavior. Moreover, from the beginning researchers have theorized about and empirically investigated the processes through which these effects may arise.

Thirty years ago very simple processes such as classical conditioning were proposed as the probable mechanisms accounting for such effects as moods influencing attraction toward others (Gouaux, 1971; Griffitt, 1970; Lott & Lott, 1960). Over time, increasingly complex processes have been proposed: moods giving rise to motivated efforts to prolong them or to end them (Isen, 1987; Wegener & Petty, 1994; Wegener, Petty, & Smith, 1995), moods making material in memory with a similar affective tone more accessible (Bower, 1981; Clark & Isen, 1982; Isen, Shalke, Clark, & Karp, 1978), the cognitive appraisals that accompany various emotions making certain evaluations of situations and certain behaviors more likely (Lerner & Keltner, 2000), moods serving as pieces of information from which people draw conclusions (Martin & Stoner, 1996; Martin, Ward, Achee, & Wyer, 1993; Schwarz, 1990; Schwarz & Clore, 1983, 1988), and moods influencing the depth, extent, or creativity of information processing (Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987; Isen, Johnson, Mertz, & Robinson, 1985). There also have been efforts to specify situational constraints on just when many of these processes influence judgments and behavior. Forgas's AIM model (Forgas, 1995) and his supporting empirical work as described in the target article exemplifies this approach.

Reading Forgas's (this issue) target article as well as other recent summaries of work in this area (e.g., Bless, 2000; Forgas, 2000; Martin & Clore, 2001) makes it clear that substantial progress has been made. We now know a great deal about how affect influences judgments and behavior, and we have evidence pertinent to several distinct processes that may underlie these effects. Researchers such as Forgas are beginning to establish when each process is most likely to operate and thereby when each is likely to influence judgments and behaviors. At times I find myself quibbling with just what certain empirical findings really indicate about underlying processes and just how clear the boundary conditions for the operation of each may be. Still, all told, I greatly admire the work and progress that has been made in this area.

Two Striking Aspects of the Literature on the Influence of Affect on Judgments and Behavior

Having noted my admiration of progress in this area, I find two things to be striking and worrisome about the nature of this literature taken as a whole. First, the processes proposed to mediate the effects of moods and emotions on our interpersonal judgments and behavior are almost exclusively individualistic or intrapersonal in nature. That is, they are generally cognitive processes that occur within a single person's head seemingly independently of ongoing social interactions. Second, and closely related to the first point, empirical work in this area has overwhelmingly taken place outside the context of any sort of meaningful social relationship.¹ At most the research participants have been interacting with strangers. Oftentimes participants react to symbols of people—pictures or descriptions of strangers. Sometimes the individuals are simply given tasks to solve alone. Although no one has said it, an implicit assumption across much of this body of research appears to be that the effects of our moods on our social judgments and behavior are likely to be the same regardless of with whom we are interacting.

Why Should We Care if the Literature is Primarily Intrapersonal in Nature?

Certainly there is nothing wrong with examining intrapersonal processes through which affect may influence judgments and behavior nor with examining how these processes work in situations with minimal or no social interaction. Often, doing so enhances our ability to maintain experimental control. However, when a literature is dominated by such approaches, we neglect effects of moods and emotions on social judgments and behaviors that occur through processes that are fundamentally interpersonal in nature and that may depend importantly on the particular type of relationship we have (or do not have) with the persons with whom we are interacting.

¹ See Simpson, Rholes, and Nelligan (1992) and Luminet, Bouts, Delie, Manstead, and Rime (2000) for two exceptions to this rule.

Thinking Interpersonally Should Broaden the Array of Behaviors We Think of as Influenced by Affect

One advantage of thinking more interpersonally is that doing so is likely to broaden the array of behaviors that we expect to be influenced by moods and emotions and, therefore, broaden our empirical efforts. Many theorists and researchers have emphasized that emotions serve to alert us to our own needs. They point out that our emotions stop us from doing whatever it is we are doing and redirect our attention to the problem at hand (e.g., Frijda, 1993; Simon, 1967). This emphasis fits well with mood researchers' theorizing that positive moods signal all is well and promote reliance on general knowledge structures whereas negative moods signal a problem and spur people to attend to the specifics of the information at hand (Bless et al., 1996; Bless & Schwarz, 1999). Thinking more interpersonally, however, reminds us that it is also the case that our moods and emotions serve important social communication functions (Fridlund, 1991; Jones, Collins, & Hong, 1991; Levenson, 1994; Miller & Leary, 1992).

For instance, emotions can alert others to our needs and prompt them to address those needs, and thus emotions can help us to mobilize external resources (Buck, 1984, 1989; Clark, Fitness, & Brissette, 2001; Clark & Watson, 1994; Scott, 1958, 1980). Indeed, expressions of emotion signaling our needs to others who care about us may constitute one of the most important ways in which we garner help. Think of the young child who experiences sadness and cries. When in the presence of a parent or other caregiver, the expressions and vocalizations can be a very effective means of garnering help. Expressing sadness or anxiety within the context of a close relationship or one desired to be close has been shown to serve the same function in adult relationships (Clark, Ouellette, Powell, & Milberg, 1987; Simpson et al., 1992). When sadness is experienced in the context of a close relationship, we may expect it to result in outward expressions of the emotion and sometimes even exaggerated expressions in attempts at supplication (Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1995). Sad and anxious moods may also trigger help seeking and self-disclosures in such a context.

In contrast, our sad or anxious moods may be ignored by others with whom we do not have close relationships and may even seem irritating or inappropriate to them (Hoover-Dempsey, Plas, & Strudler-Wallston, 1986). This, in turn, may lead to efforts at suppression when we are with strangers or people who could take advantage of us. Over time, such efforts may become automatic. However, with rare exceptions (see, e.g., Simpson et al., 1992), we have not investigated effects of sad and anxious moods on choosing to express the emotion (and perhaps even exaggerate it) in the service of seeking help. Neither have

we investigated the effects of sad and anxious moods on active attempts at suppression or avoidance of others to whom it would be inappropriate to express these emotions.

To give a second example, in certain contexts angry moods may give rise to free expression and efforts at intimidation. This may occur, for instance, when a powerful person is interacting with a less powerful person not only because expressing anger may be an effective intimidation technique (Clark et al., 1995) but also because angry feelings are associated with status and power in many people's minds and because expressing anger can enhance others' perceptions that one is powerful (Tiedens, 2000). In contrast, expressing angry feelings is seen as less appropriate among those low in status or power (Tiedens, 2000). Consequently, irritable moods may be suppressed and can even lead to social avoidance among such people. It addition, it is noteworthy that expressions of anger decrease liking for the angry person (Clark et al., 1995; Tiedens, 2000). Given this, one may expect irritable moods to be associated with attempts at suppression and avoidance of social interaction in social situations in which the irritable person very much wants the other to like him or her for whatever reason. Yet again, these are not the sorts of effects of affect on behavior that we have tended to study.

Taking a More Interpersonal Viewpoint May Alert Us to Constraints on the Generalizability of Many of Our Current Findings

I argue that a consideration of the interpersonal processes set in motion by our affective states not only will suggest a broader array of effects of affect on judgments and behavior; it also is likely to suggest possible boundary conditions for, and even reversals of, some mood effects reported in the literature. Again, examples may help to make this point.

Consider, for instance, early studies showing that distress or sadness, among adults, increases helping (Cialdini, Darby, & Vincent, 1973; Cialdini & Kenrick, 1976). Presumably this occurs because people experiencing negative affective states wish to improve their moods. Helping accomplishes this because we have been socialized to feel good as a result of helping others (Cialdini & Kendrick, 1976). The fact that negative moods have been shown to increase helping and the idea that individual efforts at mood regulation underlies this fact (i.e., the negative-state relief idea) are well known. However, the people being helped in these studies are typically strangers, and the opportunity to help is generally explicitly brought to the potential helper's attention (Cialdini et al., 1973; Cialdini & Kenrick, 1976).

In day-to-day life, though, negative states may most often occur when the person him or herself has experienced a loss. In addition, negative states such as sadness, distress, and anxiety, if expressed to others will alert those others that the self is needy (Clark & Taraban, 1991). Moreover, if the other has or desires a close relationship with the sad person, the sadness is likely to elicit help (Clark et al., 1987), which in turn is likely to cause the help giver to feel better (Williamson & Clark, 1989, 1992). Given all this, will negative affective states typically encourage people to go out of their way to help strangers? Maybe not. In everyday life negative moods may typically be suppressed when interacting with strangers who, most often, also will be unlikely to ask a sad person for help. Instead, negative states may trigger seeking close others with whom one feels secure, expression of one's affect to those others, and help seeking rather than help giving. Notably, this too is a form of negative-state relief.

Keeping the same considerations in mind, it is worth asking whether sadness will always trigger effortful, analytic, and vigilant processing (Clark & Isen, 1982; Isen, 1984, 1987; Schwarz, 1990) and prevention-oriented processing styles. Perhaps it does so when one is alone, or with strangers, or with business partners. However, it may not do so in the context of secure, close relationships. Then it may trigger reliance on close others to process information or to alleviate one's mood state. Of course, this is speculative and must await further research. The point simply is that such research is worth doing.

Alternatively, consider some brand new findings reported in the target article. Specifically Forgas has described work in which moods were manipulated and subsequent interactions with a confederate were observed. In contrast to happy participants, sad participants were rated by observers as "significantly less friendly, confident, relaxed, comfortable, active, interested, and competent" when interacting with a confederate (cf. Forgas & Gunawardene, 2000; Figure 1 in the target article, this issue). This is an intriguing finding, but may it be a limited one? The confederate was a stranger in this study, and strangers like sad others less than happy others. Strangers are also unlikely to respond to sadness with increased efforts to help (Clark et al., 1987). Undoubtedly, sad people know these things in an implicit if not explicit way. Thus, it is no wonder that sad people seem less friendly, confident, relaxed, and comfortable when interacting with a stranger than are happy people. Will this particular finding generalize to a well-functioning, secure, communal relationship? Perhaps not. It is appropriate to express sadness in such a relationship (Clark & Taraban, 1991), people selectively choose to express negative emotions in such relationships (Barrett, Robin, Pietromonaco, & Eysell, 1998; Feeney, 1995, 1999), and partners choose to provide help in response

to negative moods in such relationships (Clark et al., 1987; Simpson et al., 1992). The relationship itself may even be strengthened as a result because the helped person is likely to appreciate the sympathy and care (cf. Reis & Shaver, 1988) and the helper is likely to feel good about having helped (Williamson & Clark, 1989, 1992). Thus, sadness may not cause such drops in confidence, relaxation, and comfort within the context of a secure, communal relationship. Again this is admittedly speculative, but again the general point is that there are good reasons to suspect that moods such as sadness will influence interpersonal behavior differently when we are interacting with close others as compared to when we are interacting with strangers.

Finally, consider whether another new finding reported in the target article will necessarily generalize to close relationships. That finding is that "happy participants preferred more direct, impolite requests, whereas sad people preferred more cautious, indirect, and polite requests" (see Figure 2 of the target article, this issue). In these studies participants were interacting either with people who were strangers to them or with no one at all. Might sadness have different effects on the style of requests made in secure, communal relationships? In a communal relationship seeking comfort, support, and help when one is sad is normative. It is what one should do when one is sad. Thus, it seems quite possible that sadness and self-focus may result in people quite readily and directly making requests in close relationships. Of course, this too awaits verification, but it is worth speculating on.

Taking Individual Differences Into Account

Finally, taking a more interpersonal approach to understanding how affect influences judgments and behavior should not stop at taking a person's immediate, current social context into account. It should include taking interpersonally relevant individual differences into account. Attachment theorists, for instance, have long argued that the nature of our interpersonal bonds are central to how we react to and regulate affective states (Bowlby, 1980, 1988). They have also long noted the existence of individual differences in attachment styles (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). There is now ample evidence that within the context of a relationship that society dictates ought to be warm, supportive, and caring, securely attached people react to their own states of anger, sadness, and anxiety in more constructive, help-seeking, and problem-solving manners than do insecurely attached persons. Insecurely attached persons tend to react in more independent and potentially relationship-harming ways (e.g., Kobak, Cole, Ferenz-Gillies, Fleming, &

Gamble, 1993; Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Mikulincer, 1998; Simpson et al., 1992). Thus, a consideration of individual differences in attachment styles may further moderate predictions and findings regarding how negative moods influence judgments and behaviors. Perhaps when anyone judges strangers and when insecure people judge anyone, negative moods will lead to more negative social judgments. However such effects may not occur when secure people judge their own close relationship partners.

Again, all this is speculative, but such speculations may be worth testing. It also may be worth searching for other relationship-relevant individual-difference variables that may moderate reactions to our moods and emotions.

Conclusions

As Forgas makes clear in the target article, we now know a great deal about how moods and emotions influence how individuals process information and how those processes, in turn, can influence judgments and behaviors. However, the literature he reviews focuses on intrapersonal processes and includes studies that have been carried out outside the context of the meaningful, ongoing relationships. Although much has been learned, I suspect that by neglecting interpersonal processes and relationship context, we may have missed many important effects of affect on judgments and behaviors.

There is abundant evidence that much and perhaps most of the emotion we experience in everyday life arises in the context of our social relationships (DeRivera, 1984; Scherer, Wallbott, & Summerfield, 1986; Schwartz & Shaver, 1987; Trevarthen, 1984). For example, Csikszentmihalyi and his colleagues have found that both adolescents and adults are more likely to report feeling happy when they are with friends than when they are alone (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Larson, Csikszentmihalyi, & Graef, 1982), and others have found that joy and anger are much more likely and sadness somewhat more likely to occur in social than in non-social contexts (Babad & Wallbott, 1986). Still others have made the case that highly interdependent relationships are, themselves, likely to be the source of much of the emotion we feel (Berscheid & Ammazalorso, 2000).

Given that affect often arises in the context of ongoing, meaningful social relationships, perhaps it is time to refocus some of our efforts toward understanding interpersonal effects of moods and emotions and the processes that underlie them. Forgas's AIM model and his related research teach us that there are boundary conditions for when affect will infiltrate intrapersonal cognitive processes and thereby influence behavior and judgments. Awareness that our affective states can in-

fluence our behavior through processes that occur between as well as within people may highlight important social-context effects illuminating even more fully when and how affect influences our judgments and behavior. As Ekman and Davidson (1994) noted, interpersonal aspects of moods and emotions have been given short shift by psychologists. The point of this commentary is simply to argue that it is worth changing this state of affairs.

Notes

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Affect as Embodied Information

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If the study of cognition concerns knowledge, the study of emotion concerns value. That is, in contrast to cognitions that are about the presence and absence of attributes, the inclusiveness of categories, and the truth and falsity of propositions, emotions are about the goodness and badness of these things (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988). In this commentary, we argue that the cognitive consequences that follow from mood depend on the information about goodness and badness that is conveyed by pleasant and unpleasant feelings. An alternative possibility is that moods have such consequences because they bring positive and negative concepts to mind (e.g., Forgas, 1995, this issue). However, we think that when affect enters into judgments and decisions, it does so directly through the informa-

tion embodied in affective feelings and only indirectly by activating positive or negative thoughts.

In addition to conveying information about value, emotions are psychological states, which means that they involve multiple systems (e.g., cognitive, experiential, physiological, expressive, behavioral, etc.), all dedicated to the same evaluation at the same time. Thus, for a person to be in an emotional state of joy or fear, for example, some reflection of that joy or fear should be evident in more than one system. Moreover, each representation of an emotional state appears to have its own function. For example, emotional expressions play a role in the social consequences of affect by conveying affective information to others, and emotional feelings play a role in the cognitive conse-