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Turning the Tables

How We React to Others' Happiness

Margaret S. Clark

Joan K. Monin

Abstract and Keywords

Most research on positive emotions is individualistic in nature. It addresses the nature, causes and cognitive and behavioral consequences of positive emotions as they occur within a single person. Yet we are social creatures. It is important to examine not only the *intra*personal effects of happiness but also the interpersonal effects of happiness (Clark, 2002). To be sure, some researchers who focus on happiness as it occurs within individuals addressed how it influences their thoughts about and behavior toward others and, in turn, how happiness influences the building and maintenance of relationships (Fredrickson, 2001, 2008, and others). Yet to fully understand the *inter*personal as well as the *intra*personal processes through which happiness influences people's lives, it is

important to consider how the people who surround happy individuals react to their happiness per se. We review what is known in this regard and emphasize that such reactions are often dependent upon the nature of relationships that exist or are desired with the happy person. Ultimately, to fully understand the role of positive emotion in people's lives, we must integrate research conducted from the perspective of the happy person with that conducted from partners' perspectives, and, as we do so, to take social functions of emotion, relational context, and other emotions into account. So, too, will it be important to study social interactions as they unfold across time.

Sharing happiness generally is viewed as a good thing. A Swedish proverb advises that, "Joy shared is joy doubled; sorrow shared is sorrow halved." Words attributed to Buddha suggest that, "Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared." Yet Shakespeare's Orlando in *As You Like It* warns that considerations of others' happiness can be painful and that one person's happiness *can* decrease that of another when he says, "Oh, what a bitter thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes."

As researchers who wish to understand the functions of emotions in relational context, we firmly believe that no one proverb or quotation can capture people's reactions to others' positive emotions. To fully understand the role of happiness in people's lives we need to consider: (a) how happiness influences the happy person's cognitions and behavior and, in turn, how that person's *intra*personal processes become *inter*personal in the happy person's behavior toward relationship partners, (b) how a person's happiness per se influences relational partners' perceptions of the happy person and behaviors directed toward that person, (c) how these *intra-* and *inter*personal processes interact with one another and unfold across time, and, very importantly, (d) how relational context influences all of this.

At the current time it is fair to say that research on happiness overwhelmingly has focused on what makes an individual happy in the first place and on how happiness influences *intra*individual processes. To be sure, some of this work also has included research on how individuals' happiness influences their behavior toward others and ability to build relationships with those others (Fredrickson, 2001, 2008, in press). To a lesser extent, researchers have addressed the question of how happy people are judged by and reacted to by the people who surround them. We have chosen to focus on this topic for a number of reasons. First, as just noted, the questions of what makes a person happy and how happiness affects the happy (p.324) person's thoughts and behavior have received far less research attention. Second, it is, nonetheless, true that sufficient relevant research on this topic now exists to make it possible, and worthwhile, to write a Chapter on this topic. Finally, we wish to use this topic to make a case that, in order to understand the role of happiness in people's lives, it is essential to take relational context into account. In this case that means that how people react to another person's happiness is heavily dependent upon the nature of the relationship they have or wish to have with the happy person. Prior to diving into a review of what we do know about how people react to others' happiness, though, consider in just a bit more detail how happiness, most often, has been studied to date.

How Have Psychologists Studied Happiness to Date?

The vast majority of research on "happiness"—here defined as joy, pleasure, or good feelings—has focused squarely on the happy (or potentially happy) person him or herself.[1] Many studies address the question of what makes a person happy and, indeed, entire books have been written on how happiness is acquired in the first place (Achor, 2010; Gilbert, 2006; Ricard, 2008). So, too, has much been written on the ways in which happiness, once achieved by a person or created through experimental manipulations, influences the happy person's thoughts and behaviors. Finally, there has been

considerable work on the intra- and interpersonal processes responsible for these effects.

We know, for instance, that having good relationships, including being married (Stack & Eshleman, 1998), spending money on others (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008), having friends (Demir & Weitekamp, 2007), and having meaningful employment all lead to happiness. We know much about how people, once they are happy, tend to think and behave. Happy people help others more (Isen, 1970); are more creative (Estrada, Isen, & Young, 1994); are more insightful (Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987); and their happiness can "undo" the physiological impact of their own prior negative states (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998). Yet they also rely more on stereotypes (Bodenhausen, Kramer, & Susser, 1994) and take more risks (Isen, & Patrick, 1983). We also know much about the intra-personal processes through which positive emotional states produce such effects. For instance, positive states can bias judgments of people and objects in one's environment to take on the same affective tone (Clark & Isen, 1982); lead to efforts to prolong one's positive state (Forest, Clark, Mills, & Isen, 1979); serve as a piece of information that is processed in the service of understanding current circumstances (Schwarz & Clore, 1983); can lead to letting up on efforts to reach goals and coasting instead (Carver, 2003); or can serve as a signal that all is good and safe in one's environment; and lead to the belief that things need not be "figured out" and that relying on one's gut feelings to make judgments or decisions is reasonable (Bodenhausen et al, 1994).

The happiness research is extensive. Yet a focus solely on the happy individual cannot fully capture how happiness influences other people's lives. People are social creatures. Others notice and react to an individual's happiness. The happy individual will, in turn, react to those reactions. Happy people also may moderate their expressions of happiness in anticipation of others' reactions.

(p.325) A Less Studied, But Likely Equally Important, Side of Happiness

Most of the extant work on happiness has focused squarely on *individuals* and their *own* experience of happiness. It is important work, but most of it is firmly individualistic in nature. Fredrickson's (2001, in press) broaden and build model is an exception in that she and her colleagues discuss how positive states lead people to act in such a way as to build social resources, yet even that work largely emphasizes the happy person's role in that process.

Far less work turns the table and examines how other people are influenced by perceiving and/or interacting with happy people. Answering this more interpersonal question is every bit as important to understanding the impact of happiness on social interaction as is asking how people acquire and act upon their own happiness if we are to more fully understand the role of happiness in social interactions. In other words, we need to understand not just the intrapersonal, but also the interpersonal effects of happiness (i.e., how our happiness influences those around us both in terms of how it affects their behavior toward us, but also in terms of how their happiness influences our behavior toward them) (Clark, 2002; Van Kleef & Fischer, 2010).

We now turn to existing research on how people react to observing the happiness of others and couple that with a call for more attention being paid to how a person's happiness (or lack thereof) influences partners in research that takes into account relational context. We are especially interested in work that focuses on the social functions that perceiving and reacting to others' happiness can serve for individuals, for their partners, and for their relationships.

What Do We Know About How We React to Happy People?

Happy people capture our attention and are remembered. The first question to ask in connection with how we react to others happiness is: Do we notice it? When others express happiness, does it capture our attention?

Although more research has focused on negative stimuli automatically capturing our attention (Lipp, Price, & Tellegen, 2009) than on positive stimuli doing the same, evidence exists that displays of happiness capture our attention as well. For instance, Becker, Anderson, Mortensen, Neufeld, & Neel (2011) have reported seven studies examining whether faces with differing emotional expressions "pop out" in a crowd of faces. They found surprisingly little evidence of angry faces popping out and grabbing attention, but considerable and consistent evidence of happy faces popping out in crowds (even when they controlled for such factors as smiles and exposure of teeth). In addition, when dynamic faces are presented centrally, or in the right visual field, changes in facial expressions from neutral to happy are detected more rapidly than dynamic change from neutral to anger (Becker, Neel, Srinivasan, Neufeld, Jiumer, & Rouse, 2012). Calvo, Nummenmaa, & Avero (2010) also have shown that happy faces have an advantage over others in capturing our attention when they are presented extrafoveally.

Some have suggested that rapidly attending to happiness in faces serves an underlying purpose of alerting us to opportunities for affiliation and bonding with others as happy people are approachable people (Becker et al., 2011; Neel, Becker, Neuberg & Kenrick, 2012). Interestingly, (p.326) Neel et al. also found people often misidentify happiness displayed by faces in a crowd as having been displayed by female rather than male faces (presumably because female gender is associated with a better opportunity for affiliation).

Not only can happy faces capture our attention, they also seem to be able to hold it. For instance, Power, Hildlebrandt, & Fitzgerald (1982) found that undergraduate students who are shown photos of smiling infants voluntarily looked longer at the photographs than did those shown photos of crying infants. Other work has shown that when infants learn faces in conjunction with those faces displaying smiles, they are better able to recognize them later, whereas fearful expressions appear to have the opposite effects (Brenna, Ferrara, Proletti, Morirosso & Turatf, 2010). In addition Hills, Werno & Lewis (2011) have found that happy people remember happy faces

significantly better than neutral or sad faces and that people in no particular mood are better at remembering happy than sad faces (and tend toward being better at remembering happy than neutral faces.)

As people age, they are even more likely to attend to positive information in their social environment. For instance, Isaacowitz and colleagues have found in eye tracking experiments that older adults show preferential fixation toward happy faces, and away from angry and sad faces, whereas young adults show preferential fixation toward faces displaying fear (Isaacowitz, Wadlinger, Goren, & Wilson, 2006a, 2006b). (See Chapter 14 of this volume for more detail on this work.) This age-related positivity effect in information processing has been largely interpreted within the framework of socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 2006; Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999), which purports that motivational shifts lead older adults to prioritize emotion-regulatory goals. The theory suggests that preferential processing of positive, compared to negative, stimuli is a logical means to accomplish the goal of optimizing current mood, and there is evidence that this is the case. For example, Isaacowitz, Toner, Goren, & Wilson (2008) found that older adults' preference for positive faces does not reflect their current mood state, but rather their attempt to regulate negative mood.

Happy people appear more physically attractive to us. Not only do we attend to happy people, some evidence suggests that those who feel and or display happiness are perceived to be more attractive than other people. In particular, Mueser, Grau, Susssman and Rosen (1984) had participants imagine happy, sad, and neutral events and found that those in the process of imagining happy events were judged by observers to be more attractive than were subjects in the midst of recalling sad events. In addition, Reis, Wilson, Monestere, Bernstein, Clark, Seidl, Franco, Gioioso, Freeman & Radone (1990) followed up on this by photographing fifteen male and fifteen female undergraduates, once with a neutral facial expression and once while smiling. Then Reis et al. showed these photos to over 100 college students

(participants saw just one version of each person) and had them rate each photograph on a number of traits, including physical attractiveness. People were seen as more physically attractive when they were smiling than when they were not (see also Otta, Abrosio, Folldor & Hoshino, 1996.)

Other researchers have provided evidence that photographs of smiling *females* are judged to be more sexually attractive than photographs of the same females expressing no particular emotion (Tracy & Beall, 2011). However, the same researchers also find that happy, smiling *males* are judged to be less sexually attractive than the same males expressing no particular emotion. For men a different display of positive emotion—pride, which involved displaying a smile *in conjunction* with non-verbal behavior indicative of pride (e.g., raising hands in the air) led to enhanced sexual attractiveness relative to expressing no particular emotion (Tracy & Beall, 2010). Tracy and Beall's explanation, based on prior evolutionary reasoning regarding what is (p.327) attractive in a mate, was that for women, being approachable and friendly (associated with happiness) is sexually attractive to men; for men, being strong and powerful (associated with pride) is sexually attractive.

Happy people are likeable people. Happy people not only appear to be more attractive than others; they are also judged to be more likeable than others. For instance, in research done in organizational settings, supervisors gave happy people more favorable reviews (Cropanzano & Wright, 1999; Judge et al., 1999; Staw et al., 1994; Wright & Staw, 1999). So, too, have researchers found smiling others to be judged as more interpersonally attractive than are non-smiling others (McGinley, McGinley & Nicholas, 1978; McGinley, Blau, & Takai, 1984; Capella & Palmer, 1990). There is also some research showing that people are sensitive to the type of smiles displayed by others, such that subjects evaluate people who display enjoyment (Duchenne) smiles more favorably than others who display non-enjoyment smiles; people are also more likely to cooperate with others who display enjoyment smiles (Johnston, Miles, & Macrae, 2010) and to trust and

approach happy people (Becker, Kenrick, Neuberg, Blackwell, & Smith, 2007; Brown, Palameta, & Moore, 2003).

Whereas much of this work involves judgments of people who are smiling or not; similar findings are obtained when happiness is manipulated in other ways. For instance, in work reported by Clark and Taraban (1991), students came to a laboratory to participate in a study with another student (a confederate). They believed it was a study on impression formation and they began by each completing a background questionnaire and exchanging those questionnaires. The questionnaire that participants received from the supposed other participant either suggested that that person was interested in forming new relationships (and, therefore ought to have heightened participants' interest in a communal relationship with the other) or conveyed that the person was married and very busy (and, therefore ought to have diminished the college students' thoughts that they might form a close relationship with this person). It also contained the other person's ratings of how happy, irritated, and sad that person was at that moment. Finally, all participants rated their liking for the other person. The results for happiness were clear. Participants liked the other person more when she expressed happiness than when she was experiencing no particular emotion. Interestingly, an interaction between expected relationship type and expressing happiness on impressions also emerged. When the target person expressed no emotion, liking was equivalent in the married other compared to the available other condition. When happiness was expressed, it always produced increases in liking for the other; yet when a communal relationship was thought to be possible, those increases were grater than when it was not. Apparently, happiness is especially likely to increase liking when we are desirous of interacting with another person and might even wish to form a close relationship with that person.

Supporting the idea that happy people are liked people are some experimental studies showing that: (a) people given the goal to get others to like them display happiness as an ingratiation strategy (and it works) and also that (b) experimentally manipulated displays of happiness per se (relative to no expression of emotion) increase liking. For

instance, Lefebvre (1975) had one group of people attempt to get others to like them. The ingratiating group displayed more smiles than did the other group (as well as more gazing at the others), and a subsequent group who viewed tapes of their efforts evaluated their smiling more favorably. This suggests that people are well-aware that displaying happiness can get others to like them more.

Happy people are seen as having specific admirable traits and attributes. Returning to the Reis et al. (1990) paper, the authors not only found that observers view happy people as more (p.328) physically attractive, but that they also see happy people as more sincere, sociable, and competent than exactly the same stimulus people who are not expressing happiness. In addition, hints of happy people being seen as more feminine, interesting, and as more interdependent with others emerged. The latter trend is particularly intriguing, as it suggests that displaying happiness may advertise a person's interest or desire to interact with others.

Other work suggests happy people are seen as having more positive interpersonal traits. Otta, Abrosio, Follador & Hashino (1996) reported evidence that smiling people are perceived to also be kind. Staw & Barsade (1993) found that among students in an MBA program, participants rated happy students as having greater managerial potential than others. Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, and McDowell (2003) found happy people to be more positively evaluated by friends than others, and Harker and Keltner (2001) found that women who express more sincere, honest, positive emotion in yearbook photos are also judged to be more sociable, pleasant, and warm than other women (see also Bell, 1978 and Feingold, 1983). Finally, several studies have provided evidence that smiling, happy people are judged to be more familiar than are others (Baudouin, Gilibert, Sansone, & Tiberghien, 2000).

Peoples' happiness may lead others to help them. It has long been known that happy people are more likely than others to provide support to others (Isen, 1970; Isen & Levin, 1972). More recent research suggests that the link between happiness and helping is a two-way street; happy people also

may elicit support from others. Telle and Pfister (2012, Study 2) had people look at pictures of sad, neutral, and happy people, report on empathy for those people, and report on whether each person was someone toward whom they would likely feel sympathetic and to whom they would likely offer help. In addition, participants were asked specifically whether each person was someone to whom they would be likely to give money if they asked for loose change; offer a ride if the person were an unknown classmate whose car had broken down; give directions if the person were lost; allow the person to use their cell phone to make a class if she or he was a fellow classmate; or provide food if he or she was homeless and asked for something to eat.[2] As in past research, a stimulus person's sadness elicited reports of being more likely to provide support relative to the target person displaying no emotion. What is relevant to this paper, and is a new finding, is that happiness also elicited reports of people being more likely to provide support relative to the target person displaying no emotion. Evidence that the happiness effect was mediated through more imagined empathy also was reported. Of course, additional work examining support giving in actual interactions with happy (relative to neutral) others is needed, but this new research is intriguing.

Being around happy people makes us happy. Happiness is contagious. When those people who surround us are happy, we too tend to become happy. Fowler and Christakis (2008) documented that others' happiness seems to be contagious— we "catch" other happy people's state. They studied thousands of individuals who were part of the Framingham Heath Study, their spouses, siblings, neighbors, and friends. They measured happiness with four items from the Centers for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale ("I felt hopeful about the future," "I was happy," "I enjoyed life," and "I felt that I was just as good as other people"). They were able to examine changes in happiness as measured across time, and as it related to who had contact with whom. The analyses were careful, detailed, and complex; the results were strikingly clear. People surrounded by happy network members were more likely to become happy in the future. Happiness appeared to result from the spread of happiness from close contacts and not just

from people tending to associate with people who were similar to them. A friend living within a mile who became happy increased the probability of a person becoming happy (p.329) by 25 percent, and similar effects were seen among spouses, siblings, and neighbors so long as they lived close by. Interestingly, the effects did not occur between co-workers— we will return to this finding below.

Whereas Fowler's and Christakis's (2008) findings are important and garnered much media attention, they probably were not as surprising to social psychologists as they were to sociologists and the general public. Contagion of emotions generally (including happiness) has been documented by, and been of interest to, researchers for quite some time (Hatfield, Rapson & Le, 2009; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1992; 1994). For instance, long ago Schachter and Singer (1962) had demonstrated that, when aroused, people easily caught the happiness of a confederate, and Provine (2001) has demonstrated how contagious laughter is, at least upon first hearing it (see also Provine, 1992). The contagion of happiness may result from mimicking others' non-verbal actions, especially those whom we like (Lundquist & Dimberg, 1995; and see Chartrand & Van Baaron, 2009 for a review) and from our mimicry, in turn, providing physiological feedback that can make us feel happy (Laird, 1974; Laird & Bresler, 1992; Strack, Martin & Stepper, 1988). Of course, happy people may spread their emotion in other ways as well, for instance through their prosocial acts toward others (Isen, 1970; Isen, Clark & Schwarz, 1976) or by serving as social references for how we "should" be feeling in a given situation (cf. Rosen, Adamson, & Bakeman, 1992).

More About Reactions to Others' Happiness: Now in Relational Context

There is, as the research reviewed above shows, an extant literature regarding how we react to other people's happiness. However, to us, there is something striking, troubling, and limiting about the body of research on how others' happiness influences our thoughts about them. It is this: the majority of empirical work cited above fails to take relational context into

account. That is, the research has either taken place outside the context of ongoing relationships (true for much of the research reviewed above) or, when it has taken place within the context of ongoing relationships, the research reports fail to consider explicitly whether the nature of those relationships might be an important factor in determining reactions to others' happiness.

Fitting well with our concerns in this regard are hints that relational context matters even in the research reviewed above. For instance, Fowler and Christakis (2008) found that happiness spread between family members, friends, and neighbors *but* not between colleagues at work. This raises the question: What's special or different about relationships with colleagues at work? Those who have studied mimicry of bodily postures and facial expressions have found that we mimic those whom we like *but not* those whom we dislike or who are members of outgroups (Chartrand & Van Baaren, 2009). This provides one potential explanation as to why happiness may spread more easily among friends and family members than among colleagues. Finally, Clark & Taraban (1991) found that another person's happiness increases liking for that person, *but* also that this effect was exaggerated when research participants were led to desire a close, communal relationship with that person. It is worth considering why a partner's happiness makes us happier when we desire a communal relationship with that person than when we do not (but will still be interacting with the person). In that article, we suggest that, because emotions signal information about the emotional partner's needs (or in the case of happiness, (p.330) the fulfillment of needs), that emotions, when expressed, will be more positively responded to within relationships expected or desired to be communal in nature. At minimum, these findings suggest that how we react to another's happiness is moderated by the type of relationship we have or desire with the other person.

We believe that differences in reactions to happiness (and, indeed, to most emotions) occur because the norms governing responsiveness to partners vary according to relational context (Reis & Clark, in press). In some types of

relationships, it is normative to be responsive to partner welfare (Clark & Mills, 1979; 2012; Clark & Monin, 2006); in others it is not and, indeed, we may compete or dislike and wish ill toward others. Precisely because, like other emotions, a person's happiness serves as an important signal of that person's welfare (Clark, Fitness, & Brissette, 2001), reactions to others' happiness should vary according to relationship type. That is, precisely because a person's happiness serves an important signal regarding the happy person's welfare (often in conjunction with our recent actions displayed toward that person), displays of happiness should be important to the functioning of such relationships and less important to the functioning of other types of relationships.

Reactions to (and Functions of) a Partner's Happiness in Communal Relationships

We now continue our discussion of how others' happiness does (or may) influence our own thoughts and behaviors in the context of desired or communal relationships. Then we will turn to briefly discuss how others' happiness does (or may) influence our thoughts and behaviors when we are primarily self-, rather than other-, focused, or when we actually do not like the other person and wish to distance ourselves from them or even wish them harm.

Another person's happiness, as they interact with us, suggests that person likes and is interested in a relationship with us. We suspect one of the most important functions that another person's happiness serves is as a signal of that person's liking of us. If a person smiles and seems to be happy upon meeting and talking with us initially or seems happy upon encountering us or interacting with us later, that is a powerful sign of his or her interest and liking of us. As Duck (1986) has stated, "when someone stares and smiles, then we know he or she likes us" (p. 43). So too has Van Hoof (1972) noted that smiling is an active display of tranquility that is associated with friendliness. Indeed, when people wish to ingratiate themselves to or flatter us, they smile (Schneider, Hastorf & Ellsworth, 1979) or behave in a cheerful manner, as for example, waitresses flirting with customers at restaurants (Hall, 1993).

One study reported by Clark (1993, as reported in Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996) shows this effect particularly clearly. Individual participants reported for an investigation of impression formation. Upon arrival, they filled out a measure tapping into their mood. Participants were then told they would be meeting another person who was also a participant in the study and that their job was to try to get the other person to like them as much as possible. They would start by filling out a background form to be given to the other participants. Included in this was another mood rating. We were interested in whether participants would inflate their expression of happiness to get the other to like them. Indeed they did. They significantly inflated their expressions of happiness (and significantly decreased their reports of anger and tended to do the same for sadness).

(p.331) As noted in an earlier section of this chapter, we tend to like people who are happy. The research just reviewed suggests one powerful reason why this may be so. Whereas when thinking about why people who are happy are liked outside of the consideration of relationship formation and growth, it is tempting to focus on the possibility that happy people are simply more pleasant to be around than are others. That may well be. Yet we strongly suspect that in day-to-day life, as we actually encounter people and interact with them, that a far more important reason for our liking of people who are happy when interacting with us is that their happiness suggests that they like us in particular. Psychologists, after all, have long known that another's liking for us is a powerful determinant of our liking for that person (Beckman & Secord, 1959; Eastwick & Finkel, 2009). Happiness, then, may beget liking largely because when a person is actually engaged with us, their happiness is a powerful signal that they like us.

It is important, however, to add two caveats to the point that we like those who display happiness to us more than others because their happiness suggests that they like us. The first is this: There are strong societal norms that we should be polite and respond positively to people. Some evidence exists that members of minority groups and those with stigmas discount the happiness that is expressed to them. For instance, Pataki

and Clark (2004) have found that people who are physically unattractive tend to discount the happiness that others express upon meeting them, apparently interpreting it as politeness rather than true happiness. In addition, Clark-Polner, Clark and Pierre (2005) reported evidence that when happiness is expressed across racial lines (white to black or black to white) as compared to it being presented within racial lines, it is less likely to be perceived as authentic. In such cases, expressed happiness may be less likely to increase liking for the (apparently) happy person, but that specific hypotheses remain to be tested.

The second caveat is that a person's happiness may elicit jealousy, envy, or social comparison distress in a perceiver. These possibilities are discussed in more detail below. Here we simply point out that, in such conditions, happiness is unlikely to increase liking.

A partner's happiness can signal the interpersonal efficacy of our actions toward them. Emotions are expressed by our faces, bodies, voices, and words for good reasons. They serve as social signals to our partners. They are especially important and are most commonly expressed within our close communal relationships where they serve as signals of our needs (Clark et al., 2001). There is considerable research that suggests that expressing negative emotions such as fear, sadness, and anxiety can and does elicit support from others (Clark, Ouellette, Powell & Milberg, 1987; Graham, Huang, Clark & Helgeson, 2008; Marsh & Ambady, 2007) and, in turn, builds relationships (Graham et al., 2008). What may be less obvious but, we strongly suspect is equally important, is that our expressed happiness can and often does serve as a signal to our partners that their actions were welcomed and, as appropriate, ought to be repeated. A parent reading a bedtime story to her child that elicits pleasure in that child, and encourages further such reading is an example of this. The child's happiness encourages the parent to continue the supportive practice.

Importantly, happiness should not only reinforce receipt of support from partners, it should also modulate the nature of support giving. Not only does our happiness suggest that

partner behaviors ought to be repeated, our lack of happiness at other times should help modulate support provision, making it appropriately nuanced. Partners should repeat support behaviors that make us most happy; they may discontinue support behaviors that do not elicit happiness. Thus, the parent should continue to read the type of books that elicit a child's giggles and smiles, and should stop reading books that elicit no signs of enjoyment.

(p.332) It is noteworthy that positive emotion does not have to take the form of gratitude to have this effect. A truly caring, empathic person focused on his or her partner can take that person's happiness, per se, as a powerful signal calling for a behavior to be repeated. Indeed, being able to find out that their help has previously produced happiness in the recipient may influence potential helpers even prior to knowing what feedback they will receive the next time.

Gratitude is a special form of happiness that also should increase the chances of a partner being supportive. To us, gratitude is an emotion that is experienced and often expressed when a partner helps and supports another in ways that exceeds expectations, or when one looks back on a relationship and takes special note of a long history of loyal support from one's partner. When it is expressed non-verbally as a special form of happiness, or verbally as a heart-felt thank you or explicit statement of gratitude, it should and does accomplish the encouragement of continued support that we note here. Fitting well with this are recent findings that receiving expressions of gratitude from beneficiaries of one's actions encourages one to repeat those actions (Grant & Gino, 2009) and recent findings that people whose partners feel and express gratitude (as noted, a special form of happiness) toward them, in turn, themselves feel more appreciative toward those partners (Gordon, Impett, Dogan, Oveis, & Keltner, 2012). The idea that partner happiness (in the form of partners expressing gratitude) encourages partners to continue to be responsive is also included as part of Algoe's (2012) Find, Remind, and Bind theory of the social functions of gratitude.

Another's happiness (in the absence of our actions) signals the person is doing well; his or her actions ought not to be interrupted. As just noted, another person's happiness following actions we have taken can be a powerful reinforcer of our actions toward that person. Yet, at times, we may note a partner's happiness has arisen for reasons unrelated to our own actions. For instance, we may note that a child is happily engaged in playing with toys or with peers, or we might observe that a partner appears to be truly happy while watching a TV show. In such cases, that happiness may keep us from interrupting that ongoing activity. This function of happiness may be important to optimal functioning of close relationships, fitting well with evidence suggesting that not interfering with a partner who is successfully exploring or working on a task is a characteristic of well-functioning close relationships (Feeney & Thrush, 2009).

Our partners' expressions of happiness can lead us to celebrate with them, allowing the partner to capitalize on their good fortune. The idea of capitalization support, developed by Langston (1994) and later expanded by Gable and colleagues (2004), refers to people seeking additional advantage from positive events by marking and enhancing them in some way. Several studies have shown that sharing positive news with another person is associated with higher levels of affective well-being. For example, Gable, Reis, Impett, and Asher (2004) showed that daily positive affect and life satisfaction were significantly higher on days in which participants communicated with others about the day's most positive personal event, over and above effects of the event itself and that day's negative events. In addition, Reis, Smith, Carmichael, Caprariello, Tsai, Rodrigues, & Maniaci (2010) conducted a series of experiments and one daily diary study examining the mechanisms of capitalization. They found that sharing good news with others increases the perceived value of those events, especially when others respond enthusiastically, and that enthusiastic responses to shared good news promote the development of trust and a prosocial orientation toward the other. Their studies found consistent support for these effects across both interactions with strangers and everyday interactions in close relationships.

Furthermore, their results show that capitalization support may enhance relationships and promote relationship security because it signals to the person who experienced the positive (p.333) event and expresses positive emotions that the listener is not envious, minimizing the need for self-protection on the part of the expresser.

Here what we can add to this research is the point that the happiness that a person expresses to us (as a result of the person experiencing a success or other good fortune), may often be the way, or at least an important part of the way, in which they convey that good fortune to us. That is, if they are openly happy about an event, we know that the event is positive and meaningful to them. As such, we know it is an opportunity to help them captialize on the event. The very fact that they have chosen to display happiness in our presence may even be experienced as an invitation to us to help them celebrate and prolong their happiness. Hence, perceiving happiness in a partner may be an important step in the capitalization process, although this specific idea remains to be tested.

Distressed people who express some happiness in response to receipt of care may elicit better care from partners. The emotions that others express also influence the way we react to their vulnerability and how we support them. For example, some of our own recent research shows that among spousal caregivers of older adults with osteoarthritis, when care-recipients express more happiness to their caregivers, those caregivers, especially women, provide better support to their partner and experience less stress (Monin, Martire, Schulz, & Clark, 2009). Reasons for this may be, as discussed before, that when happiness is expressed to communal relationship partners, it can signal: (a) the success of care; (c) appreciation for care; and/or (d) care *for* the partner (Clark, et al., 2001; Graham, et al., 2008), all of which may elicit continued or even ramped up efforts to care on the part of the caregiver.

Another's happiness can be gratifying for caregivers, can lower their stress and can increase their relaxation. It is important to note that in the Monin et al (2009) study, not only

did we find that willingness of a care-recipient to express his or her happiness was associated with more sensitive support on the part of the caregiver, but also that having a partner who was willing to express happiness was associated with less stress for the caregiver.

Recent research has focused attention on the idea that providing care to others, which presumably involves the goal of making a loved one happy, also has benefits for the caregiver in terms of increased well-being (Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Poulin, Brown, Ubel, Smith Jankovic, & Langa, 2010) and increased feelings of self-efficacy (Grant & Gino, 2009). The results of the Monin et al. (2009) study suggest these benefits may occur more often and/or may be enhanced when the recipient expresses happiness.

Reactions to Others' Happiness in Relational Context: Some Darker Sides

To this point, we have discussed positive aspects of how people react to others' happiness –attending to them, liking them, viewing them as having positive attributes, and using their affective states as cues to support them in appropriate ways, and often deriving senses of being liked and supported by that person. Yet a target person's happiness does not *always* elicit positive evaluations and behaviors in perceivers.

Although there exists considerable evidence consistent with the idea that people frequently will react in negative ways to happy people, this is not emphasized in the literature on happiness per se (at least, not in the individualistically-focused, Western literature on happiness which (p.334) makes up most of the literature on happiness; but see Uchida & Kitayama, 2009 for an exception). Indeed, if one searches the positive psychology literature or uses "happiness" or "positive emotions" as keywords to search the (mostly Western) research data bases of psychological literature, one come up with little evidence of perceivers reacting negatively to another's expression of happiness. Instead, evidence for there being darker sides to reactions to others' happiness tends to be more indirect. It appears in literatures that go by different

names—those pertaining to envy, social comparison, and negotiation, for instance.

All it takes is a bit of introspection to think of situations in which relational partners do *not* react in positive ways to others' happiness. For instance, the joy of an athlete who has just defeated an opponent in a competition is unlikely to spread to the defeated opponent or to lead opponents to like the victor more. A new baby's laughter together with the parents' joy is likely to elicit pain in a couple who themselves desperately desire a baby, but have endured years of infertility. Joy expressed by an enemy may also elicit bitterness. Finally, whereas expressing happiness that reveals what one desires to a caring partner may elicit higher quality care, expressing the same happiness to a non-caring and self-interested partner may not. Expressing happiness may cause one to do less well in a negotiation. For instance, revealing one's happiness when considering purchasing a particular car to a car salesman may lead that salesman to be less willing to bargain and to lower the price. A poker face would have served one better.

Uchida and Kitayama (2009), in discussing how happiness is viewed in the East Asian and Confucian cultural regions, explicitly point out that happiness has negative, as well as positive, relational components, saying that in these cultures, "What appears to be positive (e.g., happiness) is believed to contain its opposites within itself, causing, say, envy or jealousy of others." Whereas these authors find that Americans' descriptions of happiness are overwhelmingly positive in nature (98.2 percent of descriptions being positive), East Asians' descriptions are less uniformly positive (66.7 percent of their descriptions being positive). Asians are especially aware that one person's happiness can elicit jealousy and envy in others and reflects a failure to attend to and be considerate of others (see also Uchida, 2011). Of course, others' happiness can undoubtably elicit negative reactions to other people in any culture, and we comment upon that fact here.

We now discuss several types of situations in which and reasons why people may respond negatively to another's

happiness. Most of these situations share one thing in common: They are situations in which the perceiver's attention is focused on the self and the implications of the happy person for the self rather than on the happy person and, perhaps, the implications of the self for that partner. Clark, Graham, Williams, and Lemay (2008) call the former state one of relational self-focus and the latter one, of relational partner focus. We suggest, therefore, that those especially prone to be relationally self-focused (e.g., those who are low in self-esteem) will also be those who most often experience the down sides of exposure to partners' happiness.

Happy people may elicit painful social comparisons.
People often compare themselves with other people (Festinger, 1954; Mussweiler, 2003). One reason is because they wish to evaluate their performance in some domain relative to other people (in which case they typically compare themselves with other people who are similar and doing a bit better than they are doing.) This can elicit distress in the perceiver and avoidance of the person who elicited the painful comparison.

Applying this to reactions to others' happiness, people may note another's happiness and compare their own emotional state with that of the happy person. Beyond that, a person's happiness may draw attention to what has made the person happy and comparisons may be made (p.335) along that dimension. The greater the associated happiness, the more likely such comparisons and the pain associated with them may be.

To our knowledge, these ideas have not been directly tested, but work on social comparison processes more generally supports the plausibility of these ideas. That is, upward social comparisons are known to sometimes elicit envy (Salovey & Rodin, 1984; Salovey, 1991) and negative feelings in the person doing the comparing (Tesser, 1991). Upward social comparison and negative sequelae from comparison are more commonly observed between similar than dissimilar others (Festinger, 1954), between people who are striving to perform well with in same particular domains or life circumstances, for instance, women striving to be thin (Lin & Kulik, 2002);

between people competing for promotion at their jobs (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004); and between people who view themselves as being close or in unit relationships than between more distant people (Tesser, Millar & Moore, 1988; Tesser & Collins, 1988). Thus, we suggest that perceptions of another's happiness also may elicit pain or distress more commonly under these circumstances.

Additional negative consequences may follow upon the social comparison that elicited distress in response to another's happiness. That is, perceivers may try to derogate the happy person (Salovey & Rodin, 1984), or undermine the happy person in a variety of ways, such as giving up money to reduce others' incomes in a laboratory experiment (Zizzo & Oswald, 2001), and/or they may distance themselves from the happy person, harming relationships as a result (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004).

Partner happiness, in pulling for interaction and care; may backfire. Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the functions of happiness in a relationship partner (or potential partner), showing that happiness induces liking, draws others closer, and gives information about how best to support that person and capitalize on that person's happiness. Yet people do not always wish to draw closer to others. When they do not, happiness may not elicit many of the salutatory effects that have been covered in this chapter. Instead, when one is indifferent to another or actively dislikes another, that person's happiness may even elicit distancing.

This may often occur in business relationships. Whereas we want those with whom we do business to be pleasant, we generally do not wish to become involved in celebrating their successes. This may lead us to be less attentive to cues relating to their happiness to detect opportunities to provide optimal care for such people. In such cases, expressed happiness unrelated to the job at hand may be off-putting, as it may be taken as a call for a sort of interdependence which we do not desire.

A variant of this potential downside of expressing happiness may occur even within communal relationships. One reason

may be a lack of felt security in the normatively communal relationship on the part of the observer. For such people, a partner's expressed happiness may set off alarms that cause distancing rather than closeness. The type of positive emotion expression (e.g., happiness, pride, love) and the source of the emotion (e.g., relationship-relevant) also may exacerbate potential for such negative reactions. This has been discussed extensively by Mikulincer and Shaver (2005). For example, in response to relationship-relevant happiness, Mikulincer and Shaver (2005) suggest that avoidantly attached individuals, that is, people who do not view maintenance of a partner's welfare as a priority (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), may not experience happiness in reaction to the partner's happiness. Anxiously attached individuals also may be unable to experience happiness in reaction to a partner's expression of happiness because they have serious doubts about their value and potency and whether or not they are causing the partner's happiness.

(p.336) **Happiness may elicit exploitation from non-communal partners.** Other displays of happiness can be utilized by perceivers in self-serving ways that advantage themselves, but harm the happy person. Often happiness alerts others to what we like or our current satisfaction. In situations in which the perceiver feels little responsibility for the other person, this information can be utilized to the happy person's disadvantage. Imagine, for instance, a person who has received a job offer and is now negotiating her salary. If she has already displayed great happiness upon being offered the job, the potential employer may use this information as a sign that she will accept the job even if the employer provides a lower salary that that employer originally thought necessary to secure the women's acceptance. If the employer does offer a lower salary, the woman's happiness has done her a disservice. She would have been better off to display a poker face.

Fitting well with these thoughts are findings reported by Van Kleef, De Dreu, and Manstead (2000) showing that during negotiations people are more likely to make concessions to people who display anger than to those who display happiness,

suggesting that reactions to partner happiness will not always be supportive of the happy partner nor necessarily beneficial to the relationship (although in this case they may be beneficial to the person reacting to the happy individual.) Of course, Van Kleef et al.'s findings may have been due to the impact of anger per se, not happiness. Additional work including a control condition in which the person with whom one is negotiating displays no particular emotion would advance our knowledge in this regard.

Happiness expressed by disliked others is unlikely to elicit a positive response and may elicit negative feelings and distancing. In putting reactions to others' happiness in relational context, we have emphasized that the social functions it serves are largely ones that draw us toward happy people, encourage positive evaluations, and provide information necessary to provide such person's with optimal support. This suggests that if we know, a priori, that we dislike another person or they are our opponent, that all these effects may disappear. Indeed, since people may wish opponents and enemies ill-will, seeing their happiness may be reacted to negatively. This might be considered a sort of reverse *schadenfreude* (wherein people experience happiness in the face of disliked others' misfortune.) (Leach & Spears, 2008; Leach, Spears, Branscombe, & Doosje, 2003). The reverse *schadenfreude* we are suggesting would be people experiencing distress or anger in the face of disliked others' good fortunes not due to envy specifically, but just due to disgruntlement that the other is happy.

Others' happiness may be judged negatively when it is incompatible with the social role the happy person is occupying or desires. Happiness is likely to be seen incompatible with some social roles. When it occurs in conjunction with those roles it may lead to more negative judgments by perceivers. Some cases in which this is likely to occur are obvious. The person who exudes happiness at a funeral, when a partner has received bad news, or when a partner is seeking sympathy is likely to be viewed as being out of social touch, and, more seriously, as inconsiderate and self-centered. Even when a person has received good news and

exuding happiness would be a natural consequence, if those around the person have not received such good news (and they were also expecting their own good news), expressing too much happiness will be considered socially inappropriate and an obviously happy person may be disliked.

We also suspect there are other, less obvious circumstances, in which a person who exudes positive emotion might be judged more negatively than one who does not exude these emotions. Happiness has been shown to be associated with a lack of depth in processing information about other people, relying on known information and thereby increasing stereotyping (Bodenhausen, Kramer & Susser, 1994; Park & Banaji, 2000), risk-taking (Chou, Lee & Ho, 2007; (p.337) Cooper, Agocha, & Sheldon, 2000), and even gullibility (Forgas & East, 2008). This may be true because positive emotion can serve as a signal of safety, a lack of need to examine situations closely and consciously, and a sign that one can "go" with one's impulses (Clore, et al., 2001). Positive emotion has also have been linked to less perseverance on difficult tasks (Eyal & Fishbach, 2010), more distractibility (Katzir et al., 2010), and lower performance on tasks requiring analytic or systematic processing (e.g., Melton, 1995; Oaksford et al., 1996). We suspect that people, including employers, implicitly know this information. As such, when chosing people to perform tasks or when being interviewed for jobs that require seriousness of thought, happy people may be judged more negatively than those who do not express happiness.

Happy people may be seen as undesirable partners for tasks requiring analyses, including helping to figure out problems. Considerable evidence exists that happy people spend less time and effort attending to the details of their environments than do others (e.g., Bodenhausen et al., 1994). As such, they may be seen as unsuitable partners for tasks that require concentration and analysis and may be avoided for such tasks. They may also be viewed as unsuitable as partners for dysphoric persons who desire help in understanding and figuring out their own problems. To our knowledge, this idea has not yet been tested. Even so, the general idea that people may prefer interacting with someone

likely to best understand and sympathize with their own current affective state is supported by a work reported by Locke & Horowitz (1990). These researchers had dysphoric and non-dysphoric persons interact either with a partner who was similarly dysphoric or non-dysphoric or with someone in a different affective state. They found that people were most satisfied when interacting with someone in a similar rather than a dissimilar affective state.

Concluding Comments and Future Directions

Research on happiness is flourishing. Yet, as we stated at the start of this chapter, the majority of this research and the majority of the scholars' and, indeed, the general public's attention, has been on what makes *individuals'* happy and to what thoughts and behaviors an *individual's* happiness gives rise to. More than anyone else, Fredrickson and her colleagues have pushed us to consider the relational aspects of individual happiness in the context of her Broaden and Build model of happiness (Fredrickson, in press; Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek & Finkel, 2008). We agree with Fredrickson and her colleagues that happiness can cause people to reach out and make efforts to connect with other people and that those other people may, as a result, be inspired to reciprocate the social interest. Still, we assert, a careful consideration of how others react to happiness *in relational context* remains lacking (Clark, 2002; Van Kleef & Fischer, 2010).

That's why we have written the present Chapter emphasizing one neglected piece of the puzzle—how people react to others' happiness. First, we have asked the question, how do others' react to another person's positive emotions? Second, we have addressed the implications of putting our first question in relational context, asking, does it matter whose happiness we are observing and what relationship we desire or have with that person? The answer, we believe, is a clear and resounding *yes*. A straightforward lesson should be that the impact of happiness on people cannot possibly stem *just* from how happiness influences their own intra- and (p.338) interpersonal thoughts and behaviors, but also, and

importantly, from how people around them respond to their happiness.

Still, we readily acknowledge that we too, have looked at just a piece of the whole picture that requires examination. What remains to be done in terms of understanding the impact of happiness on individuals in social context? Ultimately we need to know not just how happiness influences social lives from the perspective of the happy person and from the perspective of those surrounding the happy person. We need to consider all of this in relational context and in terms of how each person's perspective influences the other; then, we must consider how the resultant inter-personal and new intra-personal processes unfold and affect each individual and the nature of their relationship across time. Much research remains to be done.

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Notes:

(1) . We recognize that researchers have discussed different types of positive emotions including, for instance, joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love (Fredrickson, 2013). We use the term *happy* and choose not to break it down into all variants, in part because the research we review is not categorized in these ways and, in part, because we believe that terms such as *interest*, *pride*, *inspiration*, *awe*, and *love* are sometimes used in ways independent of happiness and, indeed, sometimes independent of emotion as well.

(2) . This was a measure previously used by DeWall, Baumeister, Gailliot, & Maner (2008).

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