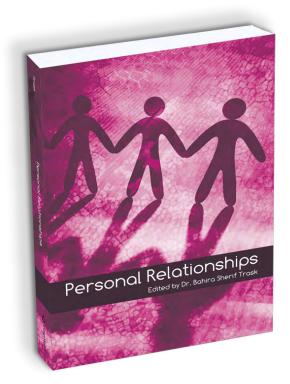# Personal Relationships

Edited by Dr. Bahira Sherif Trask

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Personal Relationships

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PART 6: RELATIONSHIPS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Introduction

The scientific study of personal relationships has grown dramatically over the last two decades. Particularly noteworthy, is the interdisciplinary nature of this work. Scholars from psychology, sociology, family studies, communication and anthropology have all embraced this area as a significant, critical area of inquiry. While much of the recent work in this area has centered on understanding heterosexual romantic relationships, increasingly scholars are focusing their attention on the myriad of other significant personal relationships that individuals are involved in. Family, school, community, and work relationships are often just as or even more influential in people's lives and yet, we have relatively scant knowledge about their development and maintenance. Also, the critical role of technology in influencing relationships is just beginning to be investigated and understood.

This anthology draws together a variety of articles on these topics in order to expose the reader to the multiple influences that come into play when analyzing and understanding the development and maintenance of relationships. These articles provide insight into the dynamics of relationships, the role of families, contexts, and technology, gender issues, the significance of attractiveness, disabilities, and relationship challenges. They challenge the notion that relationships can be understood just through simple constructs such as male and female communication styles. Instead, each article considers the myriad of influences that individuals bring to their relationships and how these elements can have differential impacts over time. The articles also consider the importance of globalization, cultural contexts, and changing belief systems in a rapidly transforming world.

—B.S.T.

PART 1

RELATIONSHIP FOUNDATIONS

The Complex Nature of Personal Relationships

By Bahira Sherif Trask, Ph.D.

Personal relationships form the foundation of the human experience, influencing our sense of self, the trajectory of our lives, and even physical and psychological health. Human beings are hardwired to attach to others from birth onwards, and study after study illustrates that a long and happy life is associated with strong, positive interpersonal relationships. These interactions provide the basis for social support, a critical aspect of the human experience. While there is an emerging interest in the social sciences in the science of relationships, most studies still focus on heterosexual romantic relationships to the exclusion of most other relationships. Yet, there exists a strong need to better understand the dynamics of the voluntary and non-voluntary relationships that individuals are engaged in. For example according to a study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the factors that most influenced employers in their hiring decisions were if job seekers had strong interpersonal skills which included relating well to others, communicating with ease, and working cooperatively as part of a team (NACE, 2003). These types of findings support the notion that developing strong relationship skills should be a critical aspect of the educational process.

Interestingly, most people know very little about the development and maintenance of strong, positive relationships in their own lives. They tend to assume that there is a somewhat haphazard course that relationships follow, and that their focus should be primarily on their significant partner at the cost of all other interactions. However, research shows that already very young children are cognizant of the importance of both their parents and their peers in their lives (Kupersmidt, DeRosier & Patterson, 1995). Moreover, as we are increasingly emerged in a highly technological and globalized world, social networks are expanding in almost unfathomable ways. We are interacting with others across geographic

boundaries and virtual spaces, opening up new cultural experiences and being exposed, at times, to values and interactions that are very different from the ones that we may be familiar with.

Defining Relationships

For the purpose of this discussion, relationships will be defined using Hamilton's (2007) description. She defines human relations as the "ability to interact effectively with diverse others in a variety of situations (Hamilton, 2007, p. 5). This definition allows us to move away from an exclusive focus on romantic, intimate relationships, to one that encompasses the broad array of close interactions that all individuals are engaged in on a continuous basis. It also allows us to understand the development and maintenance of relationships as a process that can be improved on over time and with some self-knowledge. Moreover, this definition encompasses the increasingly global dimension of human interactions. As advancements in technology accelerate at ever increasing speeds, access to new types of relationships are growing (Yan & Neal, 2006). For example, it is now possible for individuals to form friendships around the globe without ever meeting in person. On the other hand, there are negative aspects to these interactions too. For instance, studies report that many people who live in the West are decreasing their contacts with neighbors and community members. Moreover, these changes in interactions are not limited to the Western world. Studies indicate that individuals in all parts of the world are being impacted by contemporary changes in transportation and communication technologies, and globalizing processes in general (Yan & Neal, 2006).

The Innate Need for Affiliation

Despite the recognized complexity of understanding and analyzing human interactions, it is critical to note that relationships remain at the core of individual, school, work and community success. Positive relationships continue to predict health, psychological well-being, longevity and career success. The lack of positive relationships is correlated for most people with disappointment, loneliness, and a myriad of other social and psychological consequences. These stark findings indicate that human beings have an evolutionary disposition to affiliate with others and this seems to be hard wired into the human psyche. From an evolutionary perspective, affiliating closely with others and working cooperatively was the key to survival in former times. Human beings needed to bond in small groups in order to combat the elements. Those individuals who excelled at those tasks survived and passed down these tendencies to their descendents which could explain contemporary human behavior. Thus, we find that characteristics such as the need to affiliate and attach to others, as well as altruistic behaviors that favor another over one's self, are in all likelihood survival strategies from ancient times (Goodall, 1986).

In a more contemporary sense, according to psychologists, human beings have a strong need to belong to social groups. From this perspective, humans "have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and impactful relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). As evidence, psychologists point out that people quickly form into groups, even when there is no particular impetus for this to happen. They develop feelings of affinity and loyalty, and begin to separate the group from those around them. Even very young children attach rapidly to primary caregivers and suffer when these interactions are absent (Bowlby, 1969). Much evidence indicates that the formation of a new close relationship is associated with feelings of joy and elation, and often an improvement in health. But the converse is also true. Most adults become distressed when they need to break away from those they are close with. For example, changing jobs or moving to a new area are associated with great stress and trauma for most individuals (Kitayama, 2000). And the end of a friendship, romantic relationship, or a marriage tend to cause anxiety, jealousy and loneliness (Baumeister, Stilwell, & Heatherton, 1994). These findings indicate that personal relationships are at the core of understanding significant aspects of individuals' lives and need to be focused on with greater rigor and emphasis

The Multi-Faceted Nature of Relationships

Understanding personal relationships and assisting individuals in promoting positive, strong relations cannot be undertaken by just examining one variable in human interactions. In addition, the complex nature of relationships indicates that it is not enough to develop strong behavioral skills, such as being an effective communicator. Instead, it is critical to understand the context in which relationships take place, as well as examining and bringing to the forefront, people's values, strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, developmental timing in the life course also needs to be accounted for. For example, the relationships that people form at college are often quite different from the relationships they may have had in high school. The same is true for context: for instance, when people meet accidentally, or under adverse circumstances, they may have very different interactions with these individuals, than if they met the same individual regularly in a neighborhood or workplace setting. And how an individual feels about themselves plays into personal interactions too. Individuals who have strong feelings of self esteem and are used to receiving positive feedback in their relations with others, are often more likely to initiate and maintain relationships, while more insecure individuals are often more fearful about how they are perceived by others (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). Interestingly, individuals with poor self esteem are often attracted to those who verify their own self image, indicating that what brings people together is often not easily understood through facile explanations.

Intertwined with the multi-layered nature of relationships, is the growing cultural diversity of our country and the world in general. Ever more frequently, people from very different cultural orientations are interacting with each other, leading at times to very different interpretations of expectations and behaviors (Castels & Miller, 2003). For example, in the West, being direct and assertive with others is considered a highly desirable quality. However, in many Eastern cultures, these same qualities are perceived as aggressive and offensive (Hamilton, 2007). As more and more individuals from diverse backgrounds interact with one another, it becomes vital for people to understand that they are relating with others who may be quite different from themselves, and that there is quite a margin of possibility for misunderstandings to occur (Riley & Eckenrode, 1986). On the other hand, these interactions also open up opportunities to learn about other cultural beliefs and values, with respect to relationship formation and maintenance, such as arranged marriages for example.

Relationship Contexts

In order to begin to understand the relationship process, it is crucial to examine the various contexts in which interactions occur. Initially, the family context is the predominant environment in which individuals develop. Every individual forms a blueprint for future relationships in his or her family, and interactions with nuclear and extended family members form the initial perceptions of what is appropriate and "right" in human interactions. Over time, as networks expand, new encounters and experiences alter some of these early impressions. Communication styles, gender role norms, expressed degrees of emotionality, and negotiations around power are just some of the variables that children are exposed to in their diverse families. These interactions are also influenced by cultural processes and norms that are conveyed in tangible and intangible ways. Most individuals are not aware that their cultural values are intersecting with their interactions with others—and yet, it is often precisely cultural norms and beliefs that directly affect how relationships are developed and maintained. For example, Annette Lareau in her book Unequal Childhoods (2003) argues that middle class children are taught from a young age to assert themselves with teachers and other professionals while working-class and poor children primarily defer to those who they see as having more power than themselves. Yet, neither group tends to be consciously aware of these patterns of interaction. In both cases, the cultures of class, more than race or ethnicity, are coming into play, and dominating how these children interact with adults and how they cope with the varied situations that they are exposed to.

In examining and analyzing personal relationships, it is also vital to understand work contexts and the roles that co-workers and superiors play in individuals' lives. Since most Americans spend the majority of time at their place of employment and interact with others who are not part of their kin group, these relationships form an integral part of

people's lives. Moreover, the social networks that are formed both within and external to people's families, have been shown to be critical for maintaining and improving people's health. Examining some of the processes underlying those interactions, allows individuals to improve their day to day relations with those people with whom they spend a considerable amount of time, but who are often not acknowledged as playing an important role in determining personal satisfaction and happiness.

Complicating the analysis of personal relationships are also today's rapid advancements in communication technologies. As social networking proliferates and advances, and as communication with others becomes increasingly accessible in a multitude of formats, relationships are being altered in a manner that is currently barely understood. Both romantic relationships and other voluntary and non-voluntary interactions are being redefined over distance and time. For instance, in today's environment it is possible to stay close to someone despite geographical distance, and it has become relatively easy to connect to many others with shared interests or concerns over expansive networks. These new types of relationships have opened up numerous questions about individuals' needs for attachment to others, how friendship should be defined, and has even raised questions about the point at which someone could be interacting with too many individuals. Presentation of self, honesty, and appropriate forms of self-disclosure are also part of the issues that are being grappled with today, in an environment where increasingly everyone leaves a technological footprint.. For adults, the technological revolution has raised questions about issues such as appropriate parenting styles, and the extent to which they want to participate in what is perceived by some as younger people's forms of interacting, such as social networking. These social and technological challenges throw into question much of what we know about personality development and the role of traditional contexts such as schools and neighborhoods for establishing the foundational aspects of human relationships.

Organization of the Book

This interdisciplinary anthology draws on findings from psychology, communication studies, anthropology, sociology, and family studies to highlight the current state of knowledge about personal relationships. Studying relationships is not an exact science—there is a great deal of variation in what individuals bring to the table as they undertake their journeys through life. Family, context, gender, social class, regionality, religion, and race and ethnicity are some of the factors that influence people's experiences and their relationships with others. Moreover, personal characteristics such as self-esteem and self-knowledge also play a critical role in how each individual approaches others and develops and maintains his or her relationships with others. As many of the articles point out, in order to begin to understand how to improve one's relationships, it is crucial to take all these variables into account. This can begin to be accomplished by examining one's own values and upbringing, and then contextualizing those experiences. Building positive relationships

is not just an accidental event. It requires effort, insight and understanding. Relating in a positive manner to others is something that can be learned and built upon. However, much of what we know is still tentative and there exist many questions about the nature of attraction to others, how we communicate verbally and non-verbally, and maybe most importantly, how we maintain positive strong relationships.

The chapters in this volume are grouped around several significant themes. Part 1 examines the foundational aspects of all relationships including theories about the evolutionary significance of interpersonal relationships and the initial importance of family contexts for all individuals. While there is a great deal of variation in how individuals initiate and respond to interactions with others, early family contexts set the stage for communication styles, emotional intimacy, and role modeling. The articles in this section examine the significance of these early interactions and their import for later friendship, romantic and other intimate relationships.

Part 2 focuses on how relationships develop and are maintained over time. In particular, the role of social networks, including family networks and communication technologies are examined. In the contemporary context, relationships are increasingly formed and maintained through virtual communication. This alters the nature of how individuals interact, with whom they interact, and to what purpose. We still have relatively scant knowledge about the supportive role that these technologies can play in individuals' lives, for example like expanding the networks of people with disabilities.

Part 3 delves into the intimate nature of friendship relationships. The importance of friendship for children, youth, and adults is highlighted, and the role of gender in these interactions is called into question. For example, the dominant wisdom in our society, that men and women relate differently is re-examined through a cultural lens that illustrates that many of these assumptions are dependent on the sample that is being examined, cultural context, disability status, and value orientation.

Part 4 focuses on the role of attraction, attractiveness, and gender in the development of romantic relationships and much of what we think we know about relationships is again re-examined. The facile explanation that men and women love "differently" is unraveled to reveal that much of what we know is based on out of date notions about the roles of the different sexes. As an increasing number of men and women move towards greater gender role convergence, we are also witnessing shifts in how men and women relate romantically.

Part 5 focuses on challenges to relationships. All interpersonal relationships are characterized by a certain amount of conflict, and yet, the truly significant challenge is understanding how conflict can be managed and used to strengthen interpersonal communication. Relationships can also be characterized by a "dark" side that includes jealousy, envy, teasing and bullying. Another relationship challenge is comprehending why some relationships are characterized by infidelity and disloyalty. Understanding why those behaviors take place and how we can learn to control and eliminate them, allows us to improve individuals' lives and assist them in building positive human interactions.

Lastly, in Part 6 the impact of contemporary issues such as the feminization of the workforce, the status of individuals with disabilities and the role of globalization are examined. Human relationships are closely intertwined with changes in the world economy bringing together individuals from poorer parts of the world with those in the industrialized world. In particular, with the large number of middle class women in the West working outside of the home, new relationships are being forged between immigrants who arrive as caretakers and domestics. This massive migration is changing the nature of both family and work life. All of these issues belong in the domain of interpersonal relationships, and yet, many of them have not been explored with any significant amount of attention in recent scholarship on personal relationships.

Ultimately, the goal of this book is to assist the reader in understanding his or her relationships from new perspectives. An examination of both voluntary and non-voluntary relationships in the contemporary globalized context illustrates the importance of personal characteristics, process, cultural values, and context in the formation and development of strong supportive human interactions. There is no foolproof way of ensuring that all relationships that individuals engage in, will be positive and mutually beneficial. Insight, however, into the fundamentals and the progression of relationships benefits those who are seeking to create more fulfilling lives for themselves and others.

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Emotion and Communication in Families

By Julie Fitness and Jill Duffield

> *… interpersonal communication is truly "a reciprocation of emotions—a dance of emotions."*
>
> —Zajonc, (1998, p. 593).

F amily life is a dynamic, intricately patterned kaleidoscope of feelings and emotions, ranging from the most intense hues of anger, hate, and love to the mildest shades of irritation, hurt, and affection. There are times when the family provides an emotional refuge, a "haven in a heartless world." At other times, the family is a crucible of dark emotions that may fracture and destroy family relationships. The emotional life of the family is rich and extraordinarily complex: a complexity that derives, in part, from the sheer number of the relationships it may comprise, from adult partners/spouses to parents and children, siblings, and extended/blended family members, including aunts, uncles, grandparents, stepparents, and beyond. Every family member is a potentially powerful source of emotion for every other family member, and every family member's expression of emotion has a more or less powerful impact on other family members. Emotions, then, can be thought of as the currency of family relationships, imbuing them with meaning and importance.

In recent years, research on emotion has flourished. However, theoretical and empirical work on emotional communication in relational contexts such as the family has been relatively sparse and scattered throughout different literatures (e.g., sociology, social, developmental and clinical psychology, and communication studies). Our aim in this [article],

then, is to provide an integrative account of what we know, and do not know, about some of the most interesting and important aspects of emotion communication in families. We begin with a discussion of the functions of emotions, followed by a review of emotion in marital and sibling relationships. We then examine emotion socialization practices within the family, followed by a discussion of emotional transmission and the creation of emotion climates in the family. Finally, we discuss the role of emotion communication in adaptive family functioning and propose an agenda for future research.

THE FUNCTIONS OF EMOTION COMMUNICATION

In 1872 Darwin published a wonderfully insightful account of the origins and functions of human emotional expressions. His general thesis was that many human facial and bodily behaviors, such as smiling, snarling, and crying, are innate and universal and serve vital communicative functions. Recently, a number of emotion theorists have adopted and elaborated Darwin's functionalist perspective, arguing that we are born with several "hard-wired" emotion systems that serve crucial functions in relation to our survival and well-being (e.g., see Andersen & Guerrero, 1998a; Oatley & Jenkins, 1996). According to this perspective, the primary function of emotion is informational: Specifically, emotions inform us about the status of our needs and goals. As Tomkins (1979) noted, if we did not suffer pain when we injured ourselves, or hunger when we needed food, we would soon bleed or starve to death. In the same way, emotions ensure that we will care about our own well-being and survival and that we will be motivated to act when the need arises. Thus, anger lets us know that a goal has been thwarted and mobilizes us to deal with the obstacle; fear stops us in our tracks, alerts us to danger, and motivates us to escape; romantic love tells us that our needs are being well met and urges us on to bond with, and commit to, the source of such rewards (Gonzaga, Keltner, Londahl, & Smith, 2001).

Critically, emotions also inform *others* about what matters to us. Babies, for example, are completely dependent on caregivers to meet their needs and must communicate those needs in ways that will motivate their caregivers to respond to them. Emotional expressions serve this vital function. In particular, researchers have found that babies spontaneously produce expressions of happiness, sadness, and anger within the first few days of life, and that caregivers differentially respond to these expressions (Scharfe, 2000). A baby's cry of distress is aversive and motivates the baby's mother to attend to its needs. In turn, the comforted baby's smile rewards its mother and helps to ensure she will continue to respond to its needs. Similarly, throughout life, expressions of anger communicate goal-frustration and a desire for others to put things right; expressions of fear communicate helplessness and a desire for protection; expressions of joy communicate that one is not currently needy but rather has resources (including positive feelings) to share. This, in turn, reinforces and strengthens social bonds.

Evolutionary psychologists have noted that humans are generally much more inclined to meet the needs of close family and friends than those of acquaintances and strangers. Similarly, humans are much more likely to express their needs and vulnerabilities to kin than to strangers (Buss, 1999). This suggests that emotions are more likely to be expressed within close, communal relationships than in more business-like, exchange relationships, where people feel no particular responsibility for each other's welfare. This hypothesis has been confirmed in a program of research conducted by Margaret Clark and her colleagues (see Clark, Fitness, & Brissette, 2001, for a review). Specifically, they have found that the expression of emotion is an integral feature of communal relationships such as the family, where people feel responsible for others' needs and, in turn, expect that others will be responsive to their own needs.

Another important feature of family life that makes it such a potentially emotional context derives from the complex patterns of behavioral interdependencies that develop among family members over time (Berscheid, 1983; Berscheid & Ammazzalorzo, 2001). Many of these interdependencies are explicit (e.g., son relies on mother to drive him to school; wife relies on husband to fix the car). However, many are implicit and involve expectations that family members will follow certain "rules" (e.g., Buck, 1989; Burgoon, 1993). For example, spouses expect one another to be supportive in times of trouble; parents expect children to love and respect them; and children expect parents to treat them fairly. To the extent that family members follow the rules and meet each other's needs and expectations, life runs smoothly. However, when explicit or implicit expectations are "interrupted" (Mandler, 1975) or violated (e.g., husband ignores wife's upset; child is rude to parent; parent favors one child over another), the scene is set for negative emotion—and often, strong negative emotion, given that we expect so much from those who are close to us. On the other hand, it is also possible for family members to exceed our expectations, as, for example, when a normally forgetful husband remembers his wife's birthday, or a child behaves well when his grandmother visits. These kinds of expectancy violations may also generate emotions; only they may be positive (e.g., joy or relief) rather than negative (e.g., anger or jealousy).

It is possible to predict which kinds of emotions an "interrupted" family member is most likely to experience if we know how he or she is cognitively appraising, or interpreting, a violated expectation with respect to its importance, cause, controllability, and so forth (see Lazarus, 1991, and Roseman, 1991, for detailed cognitive appraisal-emotion models). In their study of marital emotions, for example, Fitness and Fletcher (1993) found that both anger and hate were associated with violated expectations about how spouses should treat one another (i.e., with love and respect). However, whereas spouses' anger in response to a marital transgression was associated primarily with cognitive appraisals of partner-blame, unfairness, and predictability, spouses' hate was associated with appraisals of relative powerlessness and a perceived lack of control over the situation.

Different emotions are also associated with different motivations, or action tendencies (Frijda, 1986), with profound implications for what people actually do in emotional encounters. In Fitness and Fletcher's (1993) study, for example, episodes of marital anger were associated with urges to confront the partner and seek redress for an apparent injustice, whereas marital hate was associated with urges to escape from, or reject, the partner. On the other hand, spouses' self-reported feelings of love were associated with urges to be physically close to their partners and to express their feelings to them.

In summary, emotional expressions communicate our needs and desires to others, and family members are expected to care more than anyone else about meeting those needs and desires. Thus, more emotions are expressed in the context of the family than perhaps any other relational context. Moreover, the complex networks of interdependencies that exist within families mean that family members' expectations of one another are likely to be frequently violated. A variety of positive or negative emotional consequences may follow, depending on how family members cognitively appraise the meaning and significance of the violation. In the next section of the [article], we discuss emotion communication within one of the best studied of all familial relationships: marriage.

EMOTION COMMUNICATION IN THE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

Given that emotional expressions communicate information about needs and provide close others with the opportunity to meet those needs, it is not surprising that marital interaction researchers have found positive associations between marital happiness and spouses' abilities to both clearly express their own emotions and accurately identify their partners' emotions (e.g., Fletcher & Thomas, 1999; Gottman, 1994; Noller & Ruzzene, 1991). In fact, there are a number of ways in which emotional miscommunication can lead to marital distress, principally because spouses' perceptions of how well they communicate their emotions are not necessarily related to how well they *actually* communicate, especially with respect to accurately encoding, or expressing, emotions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; see also Thomas, Fletcher, & Lange, 1997). For example, a spouse may believe she is communicating anxiety and a need for support from her partner, but her facial expression, tone of voice, and gestures may actually be sending an angry, rather than an anxious, message. Moreover, because spouses tend to reciprocate the emotions they perceive, accurately or otherwise, are being expressed to them (see Gaelick, Bodenhausen, & Wyer, 1985), her partner is likely to respond to her apparently angry message with anger, rather than with support. Or a spouse may communicate an objectively clear message of anxiety, but her partner may misinterpret her emotional expression as anger and again respond with anger. In both cases the most likely outcome is an escalating spiral of reciprocated hurt and hostility and increasing marital distress (Gottman, 1994).

Researchers have identified several factors that affect emotional communication processes and outcomes in marriage (Bradbury & Fincham, 1987; Fitness, 1996). For example, researchers have found that people in good moods tend to generously attribute the causes of conflict in their intimate relationships to relatively transient, external factors, whereas people in sad moods tend to see the conflict as a function of stable, global factors, such as the partner's personality flaws (Forgas, 1994). Chronic emotional dispositions such as depression and negative affectivity, or the tendency to experience frequent episodes of anxiety, anger, and sadness, cast a similarly gloomy pall over people's habitual ways of interpreting and responding to their spouses' behaviors (Beach & Fincham, 1994; Segrin, 1998). Ironically, depressed spouses' negative expectations and perceptions may elicit the kinds of defensive partner responses that only serve to confirm their pessimistic outlooks. Marital happiness, too, plays a major role in coloring spouses' expectations and perceptions of each other's behaviors, with distressed spouses tending to interpret their partners' behaviors in much the same way as do sad spouses (Fitness, Fletcher, & Overall, in press; Fletcher & Fincham, 1991).

Another important factor that affects emotional communication in marriage derives from spouses' relationship histories and, in particular, their early attachment relationships with caregivers. According to attachment theorists (e.g., see Bowlby, 1969; Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996), individuals develop schemas, or mental "working models" about what to expect from intimate relationships, based on the security of their attachment relationships in childhood. Infants develop a secure attachment style when they feel safe, loved, and accepted. This results from sensitive caregiving in which the infant's emotional signals are accurately decoded and responded to. Avoidant attachment, on the other hand, results from perceptions that the caregiver is habitually unavailable and unresponsive. Infants learn that expressing needs does not bring the comfort they desire and that they must rely on themselves in times of trouble. Finally, anxious/ambivalent attachment develops when caregivers respond inconsistently to their infants' needs. Sometimes expressing distress brings comfort; sometimes it brings punishment or no response at all. Accordingly, infants tend to become preoccupied with the caregiver and to express intense anger and anxiety when they have unmet needs in order to maximize the chances of obtaining attention and care.

Within adult romantic and marital relationships, individuals' attachment schemas influence both their own emotion communication styles and their responses to their partners' needs and expressions of emotion. Individuals with secure attachment styles, for example, are comfortable with the expression of a range of emotions and are appropriately responsive to their partners' emotional expressions (e.g., Feeney, 1999). Avoidant individuals, however, tend to discount their partners' needs or react with anger to them and to distance themselves from their partners when experiencing stress themselves (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Anxious–ambivalent individuals respond inconsistently to

their partners' needs and are vigilant for signs of rejection. They also express negative emotions such as anger and jealousy more intensely and more often than secure individuals (Shaver et al., 1996).

Finally, several reliable gender differences in marital emotion communication have been identified, with women generally better than men at both accurately encoding and decoding emotions (see Noller & Ruzzene, 1991). Furthermore, women tend to express emotions like sadness and fear more frequently than men, whereas men tend to express emotions like anger and contempt more frequently than women (see Brody, 1999). In her theoretical analysis of gender and emotion, Brody claimed that men are less likely than women to express sadness and fear because such emotions signal vulnerability and a need for support. Men's roles, however, are typically associated with the exercise of power and control; thus, men who display "vulnerable" emotions tend to be evaluated more negatively and are less likely to be comforted by others. Men may react to feelings of vulnerability, then, with expressions of anger, an energizing emotion that intimidates others and may provide a feeling of control, at least in the short term (see also Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996; Fitness, 2001b).

Expressing contempt serves a similar function. Contempt signals superiority and serves to humiliate and shame its target (see Tomkins, 1979). The destructive nature of this emotion has been demonstrated by findings that contempt expressions in marital interactions are one of most reliable predictors of eventual marital breakdown (see Gottman, 1994). Frequently in such interactions the problem is not so much what is said but rather how it is said. For example, a spouse's sneer, or sarcastic, mocking remarks, may trigger feelings of shame in the partner, who retaliates with anger or rage (Noller & Roberts, in press; Retzinger, 1991; Scheff, 1995; Tangney, 1995). As noted previously, these kinds of escalating spirals of negative emotional expressions tend to characterize unhappy marriages, even in partnerships that span decades (Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995).

In summary, accurate encoding and decoding of emotional expressions is a crucial feature of marital happiness. In addition, mood, relationship satisfaction, attachment style, and gender have all been identified as important influences on spouses' expressions and interpretations of emotions in the marital context. We now briefly discuss emotion and emotion communication in another important familial context: sibling relationships.

EMOTION IN SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

Sibling relationships have been described as quintessentially emotional (Bedford & Avioli, 1996). Evolutionary theorists have noted that siblings are major social allies by virtue of their relatedness (i.e., they share genes with one another); however, they are also major competitors for crucial parental resources, including time, love, and attention (Daly, Salmon, & Wilson, 1997). Sibling relationships, then, involve both cooperation and

competition and may be characterized (especially in childhood) by the relatively frequent experience and expression of highly ambivalent emotions including love, resentment, and hostility (Gold, 1989; Klagsbrun, 1992).

Of all the emotions experienced by siblings, jealousy and envy tend to be regarded as prototypical (Dunn, 1988; Volling, McElwain, & Miller, 2002). Historically, however, this has not always been the case. In the 19th century, for example, jealousy-related emotions were associated with adult sexual relationships rather than with childhood ones (Stearns, 1988). In part, this was because families were typically so much larger in that era, and older children were expected to take responsibility for younger children's welfare. Today, however, families tend to be smaller and parental resources do not have to stretch as far as they once did. Children's expectations of parents, then, may be considerably higher, with constant monitoring among siblings for signs of parental favoritism. Furthermore, research suggests that a sizable majority of siblings perceive such signs of preferential treatment. One study, for example, found that 84% of 272 U.S. respondents perceived there had been parental favoritism in the family (Klagsbrun, 1992).*

With the birth of a second child, first-borns inevitably experience decreasing amounts of attention and other resources from their parents. In response to their perceptions that the exclusive relationship they have enjoyed with their parents is under threat, first-borns may experience intense jealousy, accompanied by urges to protect their resources, grieve for what they have lost, and/or destroy their rival. These mixed emotions may be expressed in anxious, clingy behavior, depression and withdrawal, and/or outbursts of rage and hostility toward the unfortunate later-born (Dunn, 1988; Sulloway, 1996). Later-borns, on the other hand, may experience feelings of envy and resentment in relation to their older sibling(s) if they perceive they are being unjustly treated with respect to parental love and privileges (Smith, 1991). Such feelings may find their expression in behaviors intended to hurt older siblings, such as destroying their possessions and resources, including their reputations.

Sibling jealousy and envy, then, are partly an inevitable function of birth order and the redistribution of parental resources and partly an outcome of perceived parental favoritism and differential treatment. This latter factor may not be a deliberately divisive strategy by parents. In particular, the emotional disruption experienced by maritally distressed spouses may mean they become less vigilant about treating children equally (Brody, 1998). However, the effects of differential treatment have been shown to impact negatively on the disfavored child's sense of competence and self-worth (Dunn, Stocker, & Plomin, 1990) and on his or her attachment security and psychological adjustment (Sheehan & Noller, 2002).

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* Interestingly, just under half of these respondents regarded themselves, rather than their sibling, as the favorite. They also reported feeling considerable guilt over their favored status.

Even so, the picture is not altogether bleak. As noted previously, siblings are as much allies as competitors, and sibling relationships may be a source of support and emotional warmth throughout life. Researchers have found, for example, that when exposed to marital conflict, some older siblings increase protective, care-giving behaviors toward younger siblings (Cummings & Smith, 1989). Similarly, Wilson and Weiss (1993) found that preschoolers who watched a suspenseful TV program with an older sibling were less frightened and liked the program more than did those who viewed alone. Warm sibling relationships have also been identified as powerful contexts for the development of trust, self-disclosure skills, and socioemotional understanding (Howe, Aquan-Assee, Bukowski, Lehoux, & Rinaldi, 2001). There is still much to learn, however, about how and when different emotions are experienced and expressed within sibling relationships, for example, the conditions in which a younger child might admire, rather than envy, his or her older sibling. We also know little about how emotions and emotional expressions might differ depending on the age, birth order, and gender composition of the sibling (and frequently today, stepsibling) relationship.

In summary, sibling relationships are characterized, in part, by the expression of negative emotions such as jealousy and envy as a function of their intrinsically competitive nature. However, siblings may also form strong attachment bonds and experience highly positive emotions toward one another. In the next section, we consider an important facet of emotional communication between parents and children: the socialization of emotion.

SOCIALIZING EMOTION: LEARNING EMOTION RULES IN THE FAMILY

Babies' abilities to express and recognize certain basic emotion expressions appear to be innate and play an essential role in their survival (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996). Similarly, parents appear to be generally well equipped to understand and respond appropriately to their baby's communications (e.g., Izard, 1991; Scharfe, 2000). However, as infants grow and develop motor and language skills, parents spend an increasing amount of time teaching their children the rules of emotional expression, according to the norms of their own family backgrounds and of the wider culture (Buck, 1989).

As might be expected, given the vagaries of parents' own emotional histories, parents display different orientations toward feeling, managing, and talking about emotions with their children (Planalp, 1999). Two general orientations, in particular, have been identified (though there are sure to be others): emotion coaching and dismissing (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996). The emotion coaching orientation is associated with a parental "meta-emotion philosophy" that endorses family members' feelings as valid and important. Parents holding this philosophy actively teach children about the causes, features, and consequences of emotions and help them to regulate and deal constructively with difficult emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness. The dismissing orientation, on the other hand,

is associated with a meta-emotion philosophy that regards emotions like anger, fear, and sadness as dangerous and/or unimportant, to be changed (or even punished) by parents as quickly as possible.[*]

Of course, emotion socialization is a reciprocal process. Thus, although some children have calm, agreeable temperaments and may be easily coached, others may have more difficult temperaments; they may be shy, anxious, irritable, or emotionally labile (Kagan, 1984; Lytton, 1990). These children may pose difficulties for parents who have different temperaments or emotion orientations and who cannot understand, appreciate, or meet their children's (or indeed, stepchildren's) emotional needs. Furthermore, parents within the same family do not necessarily hold the same meta-emotion philosophy. One parent, for example, may favor an accepting, empathic approach to the expression of emotions, whereas the other disapproves of the expression of any emotion other than resolute cheerfulness. These conflicting orientations may only become apparent (or problematic) after their first child is born. Conflict may also arise when two families with different metaemotion philosophies are blended as a result of parental remarriage, although little is known about the manifestation and/or outcomes of these kinds of conflicts.

There is, however, a wealth of evidence confirming the beneficial effects of parental emotion coaching on children's emotion understanding, regulation, and socioemotional competence. Harris (2000), for example, noted that conversations about emotions help children to make sense of their feelings and understand the implications of emotional events (see also Dunn, Brown, & Maguire, 1995). Parents' meta-emotion philosophies are also important in the development of parent–child attachment relationships (Denham, 1998). In a secure attachment relationship, children learn that expressing their emotions elicits parental attention to their needs. Thus, securely attached children tend to be emotionally expressive and are able to both understand and regulate their own and others' emotions (Feeney & Noller, 1996; Scharfe, 2000). These skills are valued and promoted by parents with an emotion coaching philosophy. Conversely, parents with insecure attachment styles tend to endorse emotion socialization practices in line with their own experiences and expectations of attachment relationships. Thus, for example, Magai (1999) found that parents with fearful attachment styles were more likely than other kinds of parents to physically punish and shame their children for expressing their needs, just as they were themselves shamed as children. Parents with an avoidant style, on the other hand, may discourage or dismiss children's emotional expressions altogether.

Gender, too, has an important impact on emotion socialization practices. The results of one longitudinal study found that mothers talked more about emotions, and about a greater variety of emotions, to their daughters than to their sons. By the age of 5 years, the girls talked more than the boys about a variety of emotions and initiated more emotion-related

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[*] See also Tomkins' (1979) insightful discussion of humanistic versus normative parental emotion ideologies.

discussions (Kuebli, Butler, & Fivush, 1995). Similarly, Dunn, Bretherton, and Munn (1987) found that mothers used fewer emotion words when interacting with their 18-to 24-month-old sons than with their same-aged daughters. No doubt this kind of emotion coaching is at least partly responsible for women's abilities to accurately express and identify emotions in their adult relationships (Noller & Ruzzene, 1991).

Our prior observation that men express more anger and contempt in marital interactions than do women, who express more sadness and fear, may also derive from early socialization practices. Brody (1999) noted that boys are typically socialized to behave more aggressively than girls and to control, rather than do express, their feelings. Anger, however, is the exception, with its expression attended to in boys, but ignored or punished in girls. Boys are also rewarded for behaviors that denote dominance (including expressions of contempt), and more aggressive boys are rated as more likable by teachers and peers. Girls, on the other hand, are encouraged to express more nurturing, sensitive emotions such as empathy and cheerfulness, in preparation, presumably, for their future roles as caregivers.

Even so, there are some interesting differences between the socialization practices of mothers and fathers that warrant closer investigation. For example, Parke and McDowell (1998) argued that whereas emotional understanding may be learned in mother–child conversations, father–child exchanges may teach children how to regulate levels of arousal in the context of physical play. Importantly, Brody (1999) reported that when fathers are more involved in child care, their daughters express relatively less emotional vulnerability and become more competent and aggressive in comparison to other daughters. Conversely, their sons express relatively more vulnerability and become less competitive and aggressive in comparison to other sons. This research underscores the important and largely unexplored role for fathers in developing children's socioemotional competence.

It is also important to consider the wider cultural context when exploring emotion socialization practices. Much of the research discussed in this [article] has been conducted with middle-class American families. However, different subcultures (e.g., separated by neighborhoods, ethnicities, or socioeconomic factors) may have different emotion rules and orientations. Miller and Sperry (1987), for example, found that mothers in a tough, working-class neighborhood valued anger in their daughters and encouraged rather than suppressed it because it supported goals of self-protection and motivated them to defend themselves.

Different cultures, too, have different emotion rules depending on the relative importance they place on the self versus the group (e.g., Planalp & Fitness, 1999; Triandis, 1994). In so-called collectivist cultures (e.g., Japan, China, and Korea) family harmony is prized and individual needs are subordinated to the needs of others. Accordingly, the open expression of anger is discouraged because it disrupts social relationships and puts individual needs ahead of group needs. Conversely, in so-called individualist cultures (e.g.,

North America), independence and individual achievement are prized and the expression of anger is encouraged in the pursuit of individual needs and goals. These cultural differences were demonstrated in a study that found U.S. children showed much more anger and aggression in symbolic play than did Japanese children (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1996). In addition, U.S. mothers encouraged their children's open expression of emotions, whereas Japanese mothers fostered sensitivity to other children's emotional needs (see also Eisenberg, Liew, & Pidada's, 2001, study of emotional expressiveness in Indonesian families and Yang & Rosenblatt's, 2001, analysis of the role of shame in Korean families).

In summary, some parents actively coach their children about emotions and help them develop sophisticated understandings of their own and others' emotional lives, whereas other parents discourage or even punish the expression of emotions. Clearly, there is still much to learn about other styles and philosophies of emotion within the family and about the content and function of emotion rules according to gender, family history, and cultural differences. In the next section, we discuss the dynamics of emotion communication within the family and the creation of emotional family climates.

THE DYNAMICS OF EMOTION COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE FAMILY

Families are dynamic systems comprising complex patterns of interdependencies and expectations. Every family member, then, is affected by what happens to every other member. This has important implications for emotion communication within the family. For example, highly interdependent relationship contexts provide opportunities for participants to experience the same emotions at the same time ("emotional co-incidence"), such as when parents are jointly thrilled over a child's success (Planalp, 1999). In such circumstances, family members' needs and goals are aligned, expectations are exceeded, and shared positive emotions create feelings of group cohesion and closeness. However, emotion sharing is not always a positive experience. For example, when one spouse is depressed, the degree to which the couple is emotionally close is a risk factor for the other spouse also becoming depressed (Tower & Kasl, 1995). In close relationships, people feel responsible for meeting each other's needs; however, the partner of a depressed spouse may well become disheartened by his/her inability to relieve his/her spouse's chronic neediness. The potency and contagiousness of negative emotions were also demonstrated by Thompson and Bolger (1999), who found that depression in one partner reduces happiness in the other, rather than the other way around (see also Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001).

Parental depression also has a variety of negative effects on children (Segrin, 1998; Zahn-Waxler, 2000). Depressed parents tend to be less affectionate toward their children, feel more guilt and resentment toward them, and experience more difficulty in

communicating with them (Brody, 1998). Not surprisingly, such children tend to exhibit behavioral problems that may then aggravate their parents' depression. Even transient negative moods may be passed onto children, only to rebound on parents. For example, parents in bad moods may pay selective attention to their children's undesirable behaviors and interpret them in ways that aggravate the situation ("he is doing this deliberately to annoy me"; Jouriles & O'Leary, 1990). Children are thus more likely to be punished, with their angry reactions exacerbating parental negativity.

Parental anger has a particularly negative impact on children, with the results of several studies suggesting that children exposed to overt and intense displays of parental anger are at risk for behavioral problems such as aggression, anxiety, and depression (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Jenkins & Smith, 1991). These and other researchers have suggested that parental anger and children's emotional dysregulation may be linked, in part, because angry parents model dysfunctional ways of behaving and impart a hostile attributional style to their children. Boyum and Parke (1995), for example, observed parental emotional expressions during a family dinner and found that negative emotional exchanges between parents were associated with teacher ratings of children's verbal aggression. In effect, these children appeared to be acquiring anger scripts comprising such beliefs as "if I feel threatened, I should attack"; "if something bad happens, someone else is always to blame" (see also Fehr & Baldwin, 1996; Fitness, 1996).

Emotions, then, may cascade through families and create emotional atmospheres, or climates, that affect the day-to-day feelings and functioning of family members. Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine, and Volling (1991), for example, reported that as men became more unhappy in their marriages, they became more negative in their interactions with their children. Their children, in turn, reciprocated the negative emotions that were being expressed to them, which exacerbated their fathers' dissatisfaction with parenting and the marital relationship. Thus, fathers withdrew further from their wives and children, which exacerbated their wives' and children's distress. Given that in such circumstances siblings may be more likely to fight with one another, which further upsets their parents (Brody, 1998), it is not difficult to imagine how a whole family may become immersed in a climate of hostility and unhappiness.

There are many other kinds of emotional family climates, though few have been well studied. One kind that has been extensively investigated is the so-called high "EE" (expressed emotion) family climate, characterized by high levels of negative emotional expression, including criticism, hostility, and intrusiveness (Blechman, 1990). This kind of volatile, aggressive emotional climate is especially detrimental to mentally ill (particularly schizophrenic) patients, who tend to relapse quickly after returning home (see Kavanagh et al., 1997). In contrast, other families are distinguished by a climate of coldness and emotional disengagement; others again may be dominated by a highly controlling family member who terrorizes the rest of the family, effectively creating

a climate of fear (e.g., see Dutton, 1998). On the other hand, Blechman (1990) has documented the existence of very positive emotional family climates characterized by high levels of mutual trust, affection, and warmth. Such nurturing family climates have been found to promote children's empathy for others, including their siblings (Brody, 1998; Zahn-Waxler, 2000).

One interesting aspect of positive family climates concerns the role of women in creating and maintaining them. Some researchers have argued that women still do the bulk of nurturing "emotion work" in the family by supporting and meeting the emotional needs of their spouses and children (DeVault, 1999; Hochschild, 1979). Studies of emotional transmission in the family have demonstrated the existence of an emotional hierarchy, with men's emotions having the most impact on family members overall (Larson & Richards, 1994). This implies that, although the family is a communal context in which family members feel mutually responsible for meeting each other's needs, it is women who feel most responsible for meeting the needs of their spouses and children (see also Brody, 1999). Thus, women's emotional expressions tend to revolve around empathic responding to others' needs, whereas men's emotional expressions tend to be associated with asserting their dominance in the family (Roberts & Krokoff, 1990).

Other research supporting this interpretation comes from studies of women's mediational roles in the family. Seery and Crowley (2000), for example, noted that women are frequently responsible for nurturing the relationship between fathers and children. This involves offering suggestions for father–child activities, praising fathers for engaging with their children, and maintaining positive images of fathers to their children. Women may also initiate peace-keeping strategies when fathers and children are unhappy with one another and encourage reconciliation. However, it is important to note that family structures, norms, and gender/power relations are undergoing accelerated change, with expanding roles for men as family "emotion workers" in their own right. In particular, Rohner and Veneziano (2001) noted that despite the widespread assumption that fathers express less affection toward children than do mothers, there is a growing body of literature showing that father love is as important as mother love in child outcomes, although the expression of such love (e.g., in shared activities) may not fit the traditional feminine model (see Baumeister & Sommer, 1997). Amato (1994) also found that perceived closeness to fathers for both sons and daughters made a unique contribution, over and above perceived closeness to mother, to adults' happiness and psychological well-being.

In summary, family emotion communication patterns are dynamically interwoven. Both positive and negative emotions are transmitted among family members in ways that affect the well-being of all. Families also develop distinctive emotional climates, although there is much to be learned about their origins and features. We now move on to discuss the role of emotion communication in adaptive family functioning.

EMOTION COMMUNICATION AND ADAPTIVE FAMILY FUNCTIONING

According to Blechman (1990), adaptive family functioning is characterized by the open exchange of information about feelings and emotions, the frequent expression of positive emotions, and the ability to monitor and regulate the expression of emotions. There is a growing amount of evidence to support each of these assertions. For example, researchers have found that spouses generally regard emotional expressiveness as both positive and desirable in marriage, and that more emotionally expressive spouses tend to have happier partners (Feeney, 1999; Huston & Houts, 1998). However, it is the ratio of positive to negative emotional expression that counts, with spouses in long-term, happy marriages expressing negative emotions like anger and sadness to one another much less frequently than they express affection and good humor (Carstensen et al., 1995).

Open exchange of information about feelings and emotions between parents and children has also been implicated in children's health and happiness. Berenbaum and James (1994) found that people who reported having grown up in families where the open expression of emotions was discouraged showed higher levels of alexithymia, a term describing an inability to identify and talk about one's emotions. This, in turn, has been associated with health and adjustment problems in adulthood. Again, however, it is the frequent expression of positive emotions that is most crucial factor for adaptive functioning. As Cummings and Davies (1996) noted, it is not just the absence of fear and anger in children's lives that leads to optimal development, but the presence of love, joy, and contentment that allows children to feel emotionally secure (see also Halberstadt, Crisp, & Eaton, 1999).

Finally, there is a growing body of research attesting to the importance of emotion regulation in adaptive family functioning. In particular, happy spouses have been found to be more likely to inhibit their impulses to react destructively when their partners express anger and to try to respond instead in a conciliatory manner (e.g., Carstensen et al., 1995; Rusbult, Bissonnette, Arriaga, & Cox, 1998). Similarly, Fitness and Fletcher (1993) found spouses reported making efforts to control the expression of anger in the interests of marital harmony (see also Fehr & Baldwin, 1996). Children, too, who are taught by their parents how to effectively regulate their emotions display greater socioemotional competence and have more positive relationships with parents, siblings, and peers (Denham, 1998; Planalp, 1999).

This emphasis on the role of open, positive emotion expression and emotion regulation in adaptive family functioning is echoed in the growing literatures on emotional competence (e.g., Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Saarni, 2001) and emotional intelligence (e.g., Fitness, 2001b). Typical definitions of these closely related constructs include such features as the ability to accurately encode and decode emotions, the ability to understand the meanings of emotions and to be able to respond appropriately to them, and the ability to effectively manage and regulate both one's own and others' emotions.

This raises the question of whether there might be such an entity as the emotionally intelligent family and what kinds of behaviors it might exhibit.

The work of marital and family researchers provides some clues. For example, Gottman (1998) reported that marriages become distressed when spouses become too busy to respond fully or appropriately to one another's needs. In the process of turning away from one another, they also neglect to listen to one another, fail to make "cognitive room" for each other, rarely soothe and comfort one another, and are more likely to express anger and contempt rather than spontaneous admiration and affection, in their interactions with one another (see also Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). This suggests that one distinctive feature of the emotionally intelligent family might be what Gottman and Levenson (2002) referred to as a culture of appreciation, whereby family members regard one another with fondness and respect; accept and respond to the emotional expression of one another's needs; and cultivate interpersonal warmth, compassion, and emotional connectedness with one another (see also Andersen & Guerrero, 1998b).

It is important to note, however, that positive emotions are not generated automatically in the absence of negative emotions. As Berscheid (1983) noted, relationships in which people are well meshed and meeting each other's needs on a day-to-day basis tend to be emotionally tranquil and may even be perceived as boring. It is not until an interruption to the well-meshed routine occurs that individuals pay attention and the scene is set for emotion. Generating positive emotions in the family, then, requires making active efforts to exceed each other's expectations; planning and delivering pleasant surprises, facilitating each other's hopes and plans, and helping each other to deal with life's problems. There is also an important role for positive emotions like interest and excitement to play in enhancing family functioning (e.g., Aron, Normans, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000; Gonzaga et al., 2001). Sharing novel and exciting activities generates feelings of cohesion and mutual pleasure and strengthens social bonds. In this sense, families that play together may well stay together.

In summary, adaptive family functioning involves the open exchange of emotions, the frequent expression of positive emotions, and the ability to effectively regulate and manage emotions. Emotionally intelligent families may be those in which family members feel validated and embraced within a culture of mutual regard. In the final section, we revisit some earlier themes and suggest further avenues for future research.

AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As noted in the introduction, the study of emotion communication in families has been relatively sparse. There are still large gaps in our understanding of how different kinds of emotions are communicated and miscommunicated in families, for what purposes, and with what outcomes. In addition, much of the research conducted so far has focused on dyads (i.e., spouses, or parents and children, or siblings), rather than on the family

system as a whole (Duck, 1992). In researchers' defense, it should be noted that although the "family as a system" metaphor is a powerful one (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000), the scientific study of such complex patterns of interdependent relationships poses some extraordinary methodological (and ethical) challenges. It is important to acknowledge, though, that the emotional functioning of the family overall is not a simple function of the sum of its parts.

Another distinctive feature of much of the research on this topic to date has been its relatively atheoretical stance, particularly with respect to the dynamic and functional features of emotion within the family context. Certainly, interdependence theory provides a powerful framework for understanding the conditions under which emotions may arise within familial interactions. However, this theory takes us only part of the way. In particular, it does not tell us what family members' expectations of one another are, how different kinds of emotions (e.g., anger versus contempt) are generated, or what is the impact of individual differences and contextual factors on familial emotion rules and orientations.

Social–cognitive researchers have made some progress in mapping the structural features of laypeople's understandings of the causes and consequences of interpersonal emotions such as love, anger, hate, and jealousy (Fitness, 1996). They have found, for example, that individuals hold beliefs about the typical causes of angry marital interactions (e.g., unfair partner behaviors) and the typical motivations (e.g., the urge to yell) and behaviors (e.g., retaliatory insults and/or apologies) that are likely to occur as the drama of what has been described as the "anger script" unfolds over time (Fitness, 2001a; see also Fehr, Baldwin, Collins, Patterson, & Benditt, 1999). Whether accurate or not, these understandings about the whys and wherefores of emotions are important in that they are held to drive people's expectations, perceptions, and memories of emotional interactions. We still know little, however, about people's theories of the causes and consequences of specific emotions in the context of different family relationships, such as those between siblings, and of the ways in which such understandings impact on people's cognitions, motivations, and behaviors over time.

Another fascinating area about which we still know little concerns the ways in which people use their emotion knowledge strategically within the context of the family to achieve their goals. Clark et al. (1996), for example, reviewed a body of evidence showing that individuals may deliberately express sadness in order to obtain sympathy and support, feign anger in order to intimidate others and procure obedience, and suppress anger and/or feign happiness in order to appear more likable or ingratiate themselves to others. Similarly, people may feign or exaggerate hurt feelings in order to make another feel guilty, an emotional state that tends to motivate compliance with the hurt person's wishes (Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998). These kinds of strategic emotion expressions are doubtless an important aspect of emotional interactions in the family, ranging from mild, everyday manipulations to garner

sympathy or persuade children to do their homework, to full-scale "emotional blackmail," such as when a parent manipulates a grown child through hurt and guilt to put the parent's interests first, regardless of the cost.

Finally, there is much we do not know about the dynamics of emotional communication with respect to family members' ongoing feelings and motivations. Again, there is a need for strong theory to help us ask the right questions about these complex processes. One sociological approach with the potential to help illuminate such dynamics is Kemper's power/status model of emotions in social interactions (e.g., Kemper, 1984). According to this model, there are two, basic dimensions underlying every human interaction: power (feelings of control, dominance) and status (feelings of worthiness, esteem, holding resources). Every relational exchange takes place along these two dimensions, with emotions signaling shifts in power/status dynamics.

To illustrate, a perceived loss of power (e.g., when a father punishes his son) triggers fear and anxiety; gaining power (e.g., when a daughter wins an argument with her mother) triggers feelings of pleasure and triumph. Gaining status (e.g., when a boy invites his younger brother to the movies) elicits the happiness that comes from feeling that one belongs and is a valued relationship partner. However, losing status (e.g., when a child must present a bad report card to his parents) elicits emotions such as shame (if the child holds himself to blame), depression (if the child feels helpless to change the situation), or even anger (if the child blames the teacher or his squabbling parents). Furthermore, within the family, as in other kinds of relational contexts, individuals' power and status are frequently signaled by others, as when a parent's praise confers status and triggers warm feelings of pride, or when a parent's contemptuous remark depletes a child's status and triggers feelings of shame (Tomkins, 1979).

One of the strengths of this theory is that it accounts for a range of subtle feeling states that often escape attention in the emotion literature, for example, the warm feelings that a child's smile may elicit (signaling a gain in status); the heart-sinking feeling that a parent's cold glance may elicit (signaling loss of status); the tense, stomach-tied-in-knots feeling that an older brother's teasing may elicit (signaling loss of power); the pleasant rush of blood to the head when one's older brother is punished for his behavior (signaling a gain of power). It is within these shifting patterns of give and take, power and status, that feelings and emotions are experienced and exchanged among family members.

It also seems likely that these feeling states are fundamental, in the sense of being hard-wired and having an evolutionary history. It is critical for humans, who are so socially interdependent, to be constantly monitoring their social environments for information about how they are doing, relative to others (i.e., how much power/control do they have, how much do others appear to care about whether they live or die). Feelings of being (figuratively speaking) "one-up" or "one-down," resource rich or resource poor, provide such information and motivate people to take particular kinds of action (e.g., retaliation,

ingratiation, escape, etc). Accordingly, we believe that exploring family members' ongoing feelings about their power and status, relative to each other, may provide some fascinating insights into the complex dynamics of both spontaneous and strategically motivated emotion communication within the family context.

Of course, although it is relatively easy to identify interesting and unexplored research topics in this field, choosing appropriate methodologies is more difficult and requires considerable ingenuity and resourcefulness. No doubt, laboratory-based observational studies will continue to be important, as will more naturalistic observations in different kinds of familial contexts. The use of diaries, interviews, surveys, and experimental work also have valuable contributions to make. The most important point, however, is that the choice of method is theoretically driven so that with each piece of the puzzle we uncover, we obtain a richer, more coherent, and more integrated picture of emotion communication processes and functions within family life.

CONCLUSION

Families are profoundly emotional contexts. When we express our emotions within the family, we expose our deepest needs and vulnerabilities. In turn, the response of family members to the expression of our emotions colors our perceptions and beliefs about ourselves and others and helps form the template from which we, in turn, respond to others' needs. Throughout this [article], we have stressed the potentially adaptive nature of emotions and the functions they serve in informing ourselves and others about our needs. Certainly, emotions can run amok and motivate dysfunctional or destructive behaviors. Nevertheless, emotions always tell us something important about who we are and what we care about, and nowhere is this informational function more important than in the context of the family.

Clearly, there is still much to discover about the processes involved in the communication of family emotion. However, given the rapidly growing scholarly interest in this topic, we are optimistic about the progress that will be achieved, particularly if researchers take a theoretically informed and integrative approach to their empirical work. Above all, it is our belief that understanding, supporting, and encouraging emotionally adaptive family functioning will ultimately be to the benefit of us all.

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