

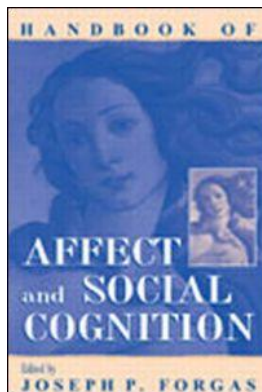
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Joseph P. Forgas

The Role of Motivated Social Cognition in the Regulation of Affective States

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The Role of Motivated Social Cognition in the Regulation of Affective States

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So much of current American culture revolves around being happy: We quickly terminate unhappy marriages, we shirk difficult moral issues because they make us uncomfortable, we medicate ourselves and our children to alleviate the mildest depressions and slightest hints of hyperactivity, we

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are constantly bombarded with messages that consuming goods will bring us joy and make us happy. Quick fixes and easy outs. Thus, on surveying this cultural and moral landscape, it would be easy to conclude that the motive of modern man (and woman) is to seek pleasure and avoid pain. In emotional terms, this would translate into being motivated to maintain positive moods while avoiding or ridding ourselves of negative, unpleasant ones. Although hedonistic this principle is certainly a potent and undeniable one, (Bentham, 1789) we suggest that there is more to our emotional lives than this. This chapter presents our thinking and research in support of a broader, contextual model of mood regulation and processing.

The hedonistic principle has long pervaded theorizing in all areas of psychology. Furthermore, given the widespread application of hedonistic assumptions to explanations of human motivation and behavior (e.g., explanations of the self-serving bias, helping and altruism, person perception and impression formation), it is not surprising that these assumptions are even more prevalent in social psychological conceptions of how people regulate, manage, or control their emotional lives—including their moods. The generally accepted idea espoused by Isen (1984; see also Clark & Isen, 1982) and later echoed and amplified by Taylor (1991) is that positive affective states are sought and maintained because of their rewarding consequences, whereas negative affective states are avoided or repaired because of their unpleasantness. The mood-repair hypothesis became ubiquitous as an explanation for the failure of many studies to find effects for sad moods that would be mirror images of the effects of good moods. (Kirk to engine room: “We’re not getting anything for the negative mood conditions.” Engine room to Kirk: “Must be that we’ve got a bit of mood repair going on.”) In fact, it is a more or less explicit component of many current models of mood and processing (e.g. Forgas, 1995; Wegener, Petty, & Smith, 1995). Therefore, let us explore our empirical challenges of this notion.

THE SEARCH FOR MOOD REPAIR

Presumably, the experience of mood entails a proclivity to entertain moodcongruent thoughts (Clark & Isen, 1982). Reasoning that moods might be attenuated if we could take sad participants’ minds off their sad thoughts, we (Erber & Tesser, 1992) first put subjects into a sad mood through exposure to a depressing video (scenes from the movie “Sophie’s Choice”). Subsequently, we asked them to solve a series of math problems. Some participants solved difficult problems (long division and multiplication)

whereas other participants solved fairly simple problems (short division and multiplication) for 10 min. Participants in a control group solved no problems and instead waited an equal amount of time for the experimenter to return with the relevant questionnaire. At the end of that period, all participants reported their moods on a questionnaire, along with their general thoughts.

Just as we had expected, participants who had done the difficult math problems felt less sad than participants who had completed the simple problems and participants who just sat around for 10 min. Also, consistent with our hypothesis, participants who had solved difficult problems reported fewer thoughts related to either the depressing movie or their sad mood. What is interesting about these findings with regard to hedonism and mood repair is the observation that those participants who sat around for 10 min showed no evidence of attempting to repair the sad mood induced by the depressing video. This finding is troublesome for the mood-repair hypothesis, which, contrary to our results, predicts that in the absence of a suitable task provided by the experimenter, participants should generate strategies to attenuate their sadness on their own.

Additional findings from this study are equally troublesome (at least from a hedonistic approach). It just so happened that the design of the study included a group of participants who completed the math problems after being exposed to a cheerful video (comedy routines by Robin Williams and Billy Crystal). Doing the difficult problems attenuated the happy mood induced by the video in the same way that it attenuated the sad mood of those who had watched the depressing video. Doing the simple problems or just sitting around for 10 min preserved the happy mood, however. Again, these findings are difficult to handle by the mood-repair hypothesis because of its assumption of positive hedonism. If people preferred happiness to the extent predicted by theories based on the hedonism assumption, happy participants faced with the difficult math problems should have initiated strategies to counteract the mood-attenuating consequences of the task.

It is important to note that the findings from these studies are not simply an aberration or an exception to a more general “goody-goody” rule, as we have replicated them with different interventions and different affective states. In a series of studies, we (Erber & Therriault, 1994) had female participants engage in 10 min of step exercise or watch an exercise video (“Buns of Steel”) for 10 min following a sad or happy mood induction. The results mimicked the findings of the previous study in that the happy and sad moods of participants were attenuated as a result of engaging in the exercise. Simply watching the exercise video did not result in mood attenuation compared to the control condition.

In another set of studies, we (Erber, Erber, Therriault, & Onesto, 1998) made some participants anxious by leading them to believe that they would be giving a speech on sexually transmitted diseases. In one study, participants believed that they would be making their presentation to a live audience, whereas in a second study, participants believed that their speech would be videotaped and then evaluated. Prior to giving the speech, participants were asked to solve a set of either easy or difficult anagrams. After several minutes of working on the anagrams, participants' blood pressure, pulse rate, and verbal responses were measured.

Results of both studies were as predicted and consistent with previous findings. Participants felt less anxious and reported fewer anxiety-related thoughts after solving the difficult anagrams and were much more anxious if they had worked on the easy anagrams. In other words, distraction alone (i.e., completion of the easy anagrams) was not enough to attenuate participants' anxiety. Instead, having been absorbed in trying to solve the difficult anagrams produced reductions in perceived anxiety.

Our research on the mechanisms underlying the attenuation of moods suggests that successful "mood repair" depends on both ability and motivation. It appears that it is most readily accomplished via cognitively taxing tasks, ostensibly because engaging in them detracts from mood-congruent thinking of any kind. It is worth noting that mood attenuation does not necessarily require engaging in tasks or activities whose valences are incongruent with one's currently experienced mood. In other words, sad people may be able to rid themselves of their mood by doing crossword puzzles or yardwork just as, if not more, successfully as they would from watching hours of side-splitting comedy. The research discussed thus far also suggests that mood itself is not the primary motivator for mood maintenance and "mood repair," as Isen (1984) and Taylor (1991) have suggested. If this were the case, our happy participants confronted with the difficult tasks should have initiated some type of strategy to counteract its mood-absorbing consequences. Similarly, our sad and anxious participants who had been deprived of a suitable task should have enacted some type of strategy to make themselves feel better, especially in light of the fact that they had nothing else to do.

Thus, despite the lack of empirical support for mood repair, hedonistically based models remain common and popular. Part of the allure of this type of thinking stems from its intuitive appeal, including its ready and easy application to many day-to-day events. It is indeed difficult to dismiss outright such "goody-goody theories" (Bower, Gilligan, & Monteiro, 1981), especially as they pertain to the regulation

of moods. All else being equal, most people would probably prefer to be happy and content rather than sad and gloomy. However, at the same time, each of us can recall a time when we wallowed in sadness, enhancing and perpetuating a negative mood by listening to sad music or ruminating on morose thoughts. Conversely, there are also times when we find happy moods and thoughts intrusive and unwelcome: Thoughts, for example, of a new love interest or lottery jackpot that intrude on our efforts to console a sad friend or interfere with the completion of a manuscript. Thus, although we are certain that people can and do regulate their moods, the questions of when and how repair or regulation occur are more complex and intriguing. Indeed, when we first began to study mood regulation, it was important to determine not only *when* people would attempt to regulate their negative moods, but *how* they go about doing it as well—ambitious but crucial goals. Therefore, in the service of demonstrating that our model is more than a fiction concocted by a couple of eager social psychologists, we present both our most ideal theorizing as well as the empirical support for our notions.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS MODEL OF MOOD REGULATION AND PROCESSING

The social constraints model of mood regulation starts with the assumption that the effects of moods are context dependent. However, we would like to carry this a step further by suggesting that the experience of moods as a result of a mood-eliciting event may itself be context dependent. Context variables of any sort can often act as powerful constraints on our emotional experience and expression. In some cases they may even compel us to rid ourselves of inappropriate affect. Sometimes we work hard to hide and suppress signs of happiness when we have to deliver bad news to someone (Tesser & Rosen, 1975), and we often work just as hard not to look distressed or depressed as we join a birthday party, even though we may have been feuding with our partner or been at the receiving end of bad news. In other cases, situational constraints may suggest that we at least try to get into a certain type of mood (e.g., to be happy at weddings, to be sad at funerals) even though our present emotional state may not resemble the desired state. However, situations characterized by relative solitude may create a context to indulge in whatever mood we might be in at the time, *sad* or happy.

Thus, although many models (e.g., Isen, 1984) propose mood-congruent processing for positive moods and mood repair and mood incongruency

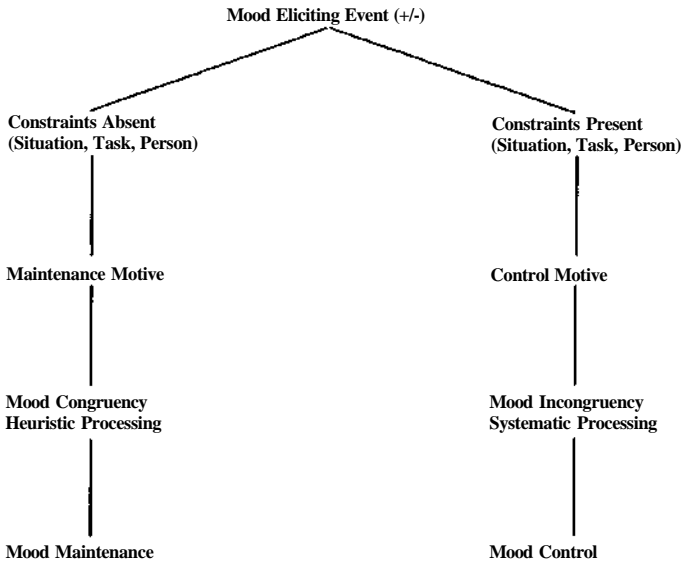


FIG. 13.1. The social constraints model of mood control and processing.

for negative moods, our model is one of the few to take a different path. For us, the consideration of context suggests a very different model of how mood regulation and processing operate. It is depicted in Fig. 13.1. First, it proposes that whether a mood-eliciting event leads to the experience of a corresponding mood does not solely or even primarily depend on the valence implications of the event. Instead, in the absence of specific constraints stemming from the situation, the task, or a disposition both positive and negative events will likely result in their respective mood states (cf. Erber & Erber, in press-a, for a more thorough discussion on the nature of social constraints). Furthermore, contrary to hedonistic assumptions, under such circumstances people may maintain even a *negative* mood for a number of reasons. One reason may be because the absence of a control motive leads to a passive priming of mood-congruent material. Other reasons may be because appropriate ways to get rid of negative moods may not be readily available (Erber & Tesser, 1992), or because the negative mood provides an opportunity to focus attention inward toward the self (Salovey, 1992; Wood, Saltzberg, & Goldsamt, 1990). As a consequence, processing may proceed in a mood-congruent and perhaps heuristic fashion, which ultimately results in mood maintenance. Of course, this is not to say that moods will endure indefinitely in the absence of social constraints. Instead, mood priming, just

like any other form of priming, is subject to natural decay. It is further possible that homeostatic processes come into play once the intensity of affect induced by mood priming reaches a certain threshold (Forgas, 1995). However, in the short run, both positive and negative moods may be self-perpetuating.

A very different picture emerges, however, when a mood-eliciting event is encountered in the presence of situational constraints. In such cases, people may be compelled to control the implications of the event by accessing mood-incongruent information, or by engaging in cognitively taxing tasks in the ultimate service of mood control. Just why this would be the case becomes clearer when one takes a closer look at the kinds of constraints that may be present in a given situation. First, it is probably a basic fact of life that we frequently find ourselves in the presence of others (e.g., at work with colleagues, at home with family, at a ball game with strangers of varying levels of intoxication). Because the real, imagined, and implied presence of others has a profound impact on our thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Allport, 1954), it stands to reason that the presence of others on any level should influence our moods and our motivation to indulge in them as well. Thus, our model suggests that given the proper set of constraints, we could find ourselves giving up positive mood states. However, if left to our own devices and in the absence of constraints to the contrary, we would be likely to remain in whatever mood has been primed—even if it is a negative one.

Perhaps an analogy for our model may be found in the physical sciences. According to Newton's First Law, all bodies will continue in their state of rest or uniform motion (i.e., a straight line) except insofar as they are compelled to change that state by impressed force. Perhaps in the affective world, moods remain at rest or in motion unless there is a reason to act on them. In other words, individuals are likely to remain in whatever mood they are in (positive, neutral, sad) unless they are compelled to change their moods in light of perceived constraints.¹ That is, once set in motion, we remain in whatever mood has been induced; however, when that mood is "challenged" by an event or context, we take action and amend our moods so that they are appropriate for the given situation.

¹ However, we are hesitant to embrace this position completely. Given the social nature of our existence, there may be few cases when our emotional experience is completely unconstrained. Thus, proposing defaults in the absence of constraints would come at the considerable and unnecessary epistemic expense of deemphasizing the importance of context.

Evidence for our social constraints model comes from a series of studies in which we (Erber, Wegner, & Therriault, 1996) made participants either happy or sad through exposure to cheerful or depressing music. Subsequently, participants were led to believe that they would be doing an unspecified task with either a stranger (i.e., another subject ostensibly doing the same experiment in the next room) or by themselves. All participants were then asked to indicate their preference for reading a set of newspapers that included headlines of humorous and uplifting, sad and depressing, or affectively neutral stories. As expected, participants who expected to complete the upcoming task by themselves preferred mood-congruent stories. In other words, happy participants, not surprisingly, preferred cheerful stories, whereas sad subjects (contrary to mood-repair predictions) preferred depressing stories. However, this preference for mood-congruent information shifted to a preference toward mood-incongruent information among those who expected to complete the task with a stranger. Happy participants preferred depressing stories, whereas sad participants preferred cheerful stories, ostensibly in order to regulate their mood for the anticipated interaction.

Preliminary evidence indicates that this preference for mood-incongruent material may in part be caused by concerns regarding the appropriateness of a happy or sad mood in social interactions. It appears to be most pronounced when it comes to real or imagined interactions with critical others. However, when the target of the anticipated interaction is a close other, mood congruency prevails (Commons & Erber, 1996).

Whether a mood-eliciting event results in the experience of a corresponding affective state may similarly be constrained by task-related variables to the extent that moods may have detrimental effects. Specifically, it appears that tasks that are perceived to be cognitively taxing (Erber & Erber, 1994) or require accuracy (Therriault, Erber, & Ohtela, 1996) prompt attempts toward mood control. Finally, a number of individual differences may help to determine the extent to which mood-control motives may come into play. People with chronic proclivities to regulate negative moods are likely to respond to sadness with attempts toward control even in the absence of situational or task variables (Catanzaro & Mearns, 1990; Smith & Petty, 1995). Deliberative mind sets should promote a general tendency toward mood congruency and mood maintenance, whereas implemental mindsets may trigger a desire to rid oneself of one's mood (Gollwitzer, Heckhausen, & Steller, 1990). Similarly, ruminative self-focus may compel people to indulge in their moods, whereas reflective self-focus may lead to self-regulation efforts (Campbell et al., 1996).

In light of these considerations, it is important to note that the model we are proposing here is not an override model of mood regulation. Unlike mood-repair theories, which suggest that moods are repaired once they have been encountered, the present model proposes that we would evaluate the implications of a mood-eliciting event in light of situational or task-related constraints as well as constraints imposed by a disposition. The general principle suggested by these constraints is that people strive to attain moods that promote goal attainment. For example, we may try to enhance the impact of a positive event when we go to a party and enhance the impact of a negative event when we are about to go to a funeral. However, neutral moods may be particularly appropriate when we expect to meet a stranger or have to think clearly, and thus we work to attenuate the impact of a mood-eliciting event in light of these constraints. Why neutrality? There are several possibilities.

First, it may be that a neutral mood is a relatively good bet, particularly when we know little about how the person whom we are to meet is feeling. Unburdened, free from preoccupation with our feelings and its resulting distractions, a neutral mood allows us to be sensitive to multiple mood affordances suggested by the complexities of the social settings. This idea fits well with the observation that people frequently moderate their attitudes prior to discussing their attitudes with another person (Cialdini, Levy, Herman, & Levenbeck, 1973). Extrapolating from these findings, one would expect anticipatory mood control to follow similar principles. To the extent that people are inclined to regulate their mood in light of social constraints, the direction of such attempts should be toward relative neutrality, regardless of whether the initial mood is positive or negative.

Moreover, as we alluded to earlier, people may attempt to neutralize their moods under these circumstances to avoid being unfavorably evaluated for displaying potentially inappropriate moods. Just as singing show tunes off-key is perfectly all right in one's shower but not in a crowded subway car, the experience and display of moods may be similarly inappropriate in a public context.

Skeptics of our model often ask two questions. First, if neutral moods give us the most flexibility in confronting unknown people and situations, then why did our participants who did not anticipate future interaction with others maintain their positive or negative mood? One answer is that they had no reason to adjust their moods for the very fact that there were no situational constraints evident to them, and thus there was no impressed force to change their state. From this perspective, the model appears to suggest that maintaining a given mood regardless of its valence (positive, neutral,

or negative) might indeed be the default, as long as there are no constraints present. Second, are there ever social constraints that would prompt people to seek a positive mood? The answer is a qualified “Yes.” Whereas most social constraints call for a shift toward neutral, there are some that call for positive moods. For example, positive affect can increase one’s willingness and ability to accept negative but useful feedback (Trope & Neter, 1994). Similarly, there is evidence that happy people engage in activities to bolster their moods when they expect to interact with a depressed other (Erber et al., 1996, Study 2). Presumably, positive affect can serve as a buffer against the consequences of interacting with someone who is feeling depressed (i.e., a shift toward sad mood).

In sum, our model is unique for a variety of reasons. First, rather than following the party line (i.e., positive moods lead to mood-congruent processing and negative moods yield to mood-incongruent processing), we propose that processing is not yoked to mood *per se*. Rather, both positive and negative moods can lead to either mood-congruent or mood-incongruent processing. Processing, then is tied not to mood, but depends instead on the presence or absence of situational constraints. A second notable feature of our model revolves around the issue of mood repair and regulation. Instead of assuming mood-repair as the default, we suggest that moods are intimately tied to their social contexts and that there are, likewise, no defaults *per se*. We also propose that characterizing our mood states as attempts to repair bad moods and attain good moods is simplistic and even wrong. Indeed, to date, we have amassed the strongest empirical support for the mood-regulation component of our model.

MOOD REGULATION: WHAT AND WHEN

Once we are thrust out of our isolated cocoons and into the vast ocean that makes up our social worlds, we may find that we are compelled to regulate our moods according to the demands of constantly changing situational constraints. Also, although some situations require the display and perhaps the experience of happiness (at one’s birthday party) or sadness (hearing of a friend’s misfortune), many situations require that we suspend or attenuate our moods to some extent. In fact, it has been argued (Goffman, 1963) that the ability to control socially inappropriate affect is what sets most of us apart from those incarcerated in mental hospitals.

As we have already suggested, we might consider the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others to act as the major social constraint on the kinds of moods we can reasonably experience. One reason why the presence

of others acts as a constraint on our moods is because we often know little or nothing about other peoples' affective states; especially when they are strangers. Because of this, sad as well as happy moods may be a burden for a number of reasons. First, our preoccupation with mood-congruent thoughts may do little to promote and might actually interfere with the smoothness with which we interact with others. Moods may become burdensome if we fear that others look unfavorably on our happiness or sadness and their concomitant emotional displays. Or we may fear that a continued preoccupation with our moods may deprive us of a sense of composure. Consequently, we may be most likely to attempt attenuation of our happy and sad moods prior to interacting with a stranger.

RESEARCH SUPPORTING THE SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS MODEL: THE COOLNESS EFFECT

We conducted several studies to test the general idea of mood attenuation prior to social interaction with a stranger (Erber, Wegner, & Theriault, 1996). As discussed previously, after listening to either happy or depressing music, we told our now happy or sad participants that they would be completing a task either by themselves or with a stranger. Consistent with our expectations, participants who expected to complete the second part of the experiment by themselves preferred stories with headlines suggesting mood-congruent content: Sad participants indicated a preference for depressing stories, whereas happy participants preferred cheerful stories.

Also as expected, participants who expected to complete the second part of the experiment with a stranger preferred mood-incongruent stories. Specifically, sad participants preferred cheerful stories and (contrary to predictions made from hedonistic approaches) happy participants preferred depressing stories. According to our social constraints model, participants made these choices presumably as a means to attenuate their previously induced mood prior to meeting the stranger.

These results suggest that mood by itself does not serve as a primary motivational force in terms of the maintenance and attenuation of moods. Rather than using everything in their power to (1) maintain their happy mood and (2) repair their sad mood, our participants adopted strategies designed to maintain both happy and sad moods in the absence of social constraints (that is, when there was no anticipated interaction with a stranger). However, in the presence of social constraints, both happy and sad participants relied

on strategies that enabled them to extricate themselves from the mood we had previously induced.

Interestingly, participants' attempts at regulating their moods were aimed at neutralizing both sad and happy moods. This was even the case when we told participants in a second study that the person they were about to meet was either happy or seemed somewhat depressed. The one notable exception was a tendency on the part of happy participants to bolster their mood prior to interacting with a depressed stranger, presumably in preparation for an interaction that would likely leave them somewhat depressed. However, even this finding could be considered an attempt at neutralization: counteracting the affective consequences of spending a period of time with someone who is depressed. However, we found no evidence that people anticipate and try to adopt the moods of their future interaction partners.

Needless to say, it is difficult to account for these findings from models based on hedonistic assumptions. Yet we must attempt to account for these results and fill the vacuum left by hedonistic assumptions. Thus, we ask how can we account for the seeming desire for attenuated moods prior to entering into a social interaction with a stranger? Perhaps how we approach our mood states has more to do with social appropriateness rather than purely hedonistically driven goals.

RESEARCH SUPPORTING THE APPROPRIATENESS HYPOTHESIS I: STRANGERS VERSUS ROMANTIC COUPLES

We completed several studies that support the idea that the “coolness effect” may be mediated by concerns regarding the appropriateness of moods in public contexts. In one study, we (Commons & Erber, 1996) recruited romantic couples for a “relationship study.” Two couples signed up for each time slot. Participants were then run through an experimental procedure identical to the one employed by Erber et al. (1996), with one exception. Rather than expecting to complete a second experiment either by themselves or with a stranger, participants were led to believe that they would be doing this either with their romantic partner or with the opposite-sex partner of the other couple (in essence, a stranger).

We predicted that participants who expected to do the second task with the stranger would once again show evidence of attempts toward regulating their happy and sad moods. However, among romantic couples, these concerns are, to some extent, superseded by norms prescribing self-disclosure that would render withholding one's feelings inappropriate. We expected those

participants who anticipated doing the second task with their partner to show evidence of attempting to maintain both their happy and sad moods. This is exactly what we found. Whereas participants expecting to interact with a stranger preferred newspaper stories with a mood-incongruent content, participants expecting to interact with their partner preferred newspaper stories with a mood-congruent content. Again, these findings are difficult to explain from a hedonistic perspective. However, they make sense when one considers that concerns about the appropriateness of one's mood are of paramount importance in public contexts, yet largely irrelevant in the context of close relationships.

RESEARCH SUPPORTING THE APPROPRIATENESS HYPOTHESIS II: ACCEPTING VERSUS CRITICAL OTHERS

To the extent that anticipating interaction with a close other reverses our usual tendency to control our moods in the presence of a stranger, one would expect that the unique characteristics of the other would similarly predict different mood-regulation strategies. Others whom we perceive as accepting of us should trigger little in the way of controlling our mood because appropriateness concerns are of little importance. However, when the other is perceived as critical of us, mood control should become of paramount importance, as unaccepting others are most likely to respond to our potentially inappropriate moods with disapproval.

To test this idea, we adapted the research strategy reported by Baldwin, Carrell, and Lopez (1990) on the effects of imaginary audiences on self-evaluation. After inducing a sad or happy mood via having participants recall an appropriate autobiographic memory, we asked them to think of someone who was accepting or critical of them and write a short paragraph about that person. Subsequently, all participants indicated their preference for reading newspaper stories with a cheerful or depressing content. We expected that priming an accepting other through writing a paragraph about that person would not trigger much in the way of mood control. However, priming a critical other should highlight the evaluative nature of that person and consequently lead to an attempt toward controlling one's sad and happy moods as well. This is precisely what we found. Participants for whom an accepting other had been primed preferred mood-congruent stories, whereas participants in whom a critical other had been primed preferred mood-incongruent stories, presumably in an attempt to control their moods.

This finding provides further evidence for our theoretical claim that concerns about the appropriateness of one's mood contribute in important ways to our desire to control both our happy and sad moods. Moreover, it suggests that it does not require the actual or anticipated presence of others to instill a motive toward mood control. The finding that our participants attempted to regulate their mood in response to imagined others helps explain why we frequently manage to control our moods even though we may be by ourselves. It appears that under such circumstances, conjuring up images of critical others ("What would my mother say if she saw me like this?") may be what ultimately compels us to rid ourselves of the (inappropriate and unwanted) moods we are in.

SOME PARTING THOUGHTS

Our social constraints model, we feel, has something unique to offer to the understanding of moods and mood regulation. First, rather than base our model on hedonistic, pleasure-pain principles, we ground it instead in principles derived from Newton's First Law of Physics: Moods continue in their state unless they are acted on by some external force. Of course, like most metaphors, ours is far from perfect. Unlike physical objects, humans have motives and other dispositions that may act as agents of change. However, far from being our sovereign masters, many of them are activated by their social context (Martin, 1999). Thus, our model fits much better with the basic tenet of Lewinian Field theory than any analysis that relies exclusively on internal forces (e.g., pleasure seeking, pain avoidance). It also fits with what our research reveals about how we actually experience and manage our moods. That is, moods remain at rest or in motion unless there is reason to act on them. Individuals are likely to remain in whatever mood they are in unless appropriateness concerns brought on by perceived social constraints suggest a change.

Finally, although our model is first and foremost concerned with how people manage their moods, we believe that it has some obvious implications for understanding issues more generally related to mood and processing. In this regard, one of the unique contributions of our model is that it takes into account the mounting evidence that negative moods by themselves do not automatically trigger a repair model (cf, Erber & Erber, in press-a). This has led us to reject theoretical positions claiming that moods carry any sort of default mechanism or processes. Instead, by considering context and motivation early (i.e., when a potentially mood-eliciting stimulus is encountered), we were able to come up with a processing model that is

considerably more parsimonious than models based on default-override principles. Although we believe in the power of our model to account for a number of diverse research findings, we also recognize that we have only just begun to push the boundaries of our model, both empirically and theoretically. Nonetheless, the progress we have made thus far might encourage others interested in the intersection of affect, motivation, and social cognition to engage in similar endeavours. As we noted elsewhere (Erber & Erber, in press-b), much of the research on motivated social cognition has worked from the assumption that pleasure and reward seeking along with pain and loss avoidance are the ultimate motivators of our thoughts and actions. Our research to date suggests that this is an oversimplification at best, and an epistemic dead-end at worst.

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