

Preface

This book is about the relationship between friendship and happiness across the lifespan and in different cultures. Experts and leaders in the field have contributed to this volume. Specifically, scholars from sixteen countries have not only provided unique perspectives on the topic and reviewed the extensive literature but also presented data addressing the relationship between friendship and happiness in different age groups across cultures. Why would anyone undertake such a project when the robust association of friendship with happiness is well accepted by laypeople and scholars? There are personal and empirical reasons.

Why do social scientists conduct studies on the topics they investigate? Although there might be practical reasons behind their choice of research, I believe that most scholars, if not all, have a cherished personal story behind their lines of research. I have been studying the relationship between friendship and happiness since 2002 because I was curious to learn why my friendships make me happy. I remember experiencing endless laughter, joy, and happiness when playing with my friends as a kid, spending time with them and engaging in a variety of different activities together while experiencing various levels of support, intimacy, loyalty, and validation as an adolescent, emerging, and young adult. Although we had disagreements and quarrels that are typical of a friendship, we were able to overcome these challenges. I loved my friends and was a happy person, I believe, because of them. Soon after taking my first course on psychology and learning about research methods, I decided to become a researcher to understand how and why friendships are related to happiness. I wanted to learn why my friends contribute to my happiness. This is the personal story behind my research and this book.

I was as happy as a clam when I started my research on the topic more than a decade ago. One of the well-accepted findings in the scientific literature on happiness that is not disputed pertains to the robust association between friendship and happiness. This is acknowledged by theorists, and has been highlighted in major reviews of the literature and books in the field of Positive Psychology. Yet, my excitement faced some serious challenges. With a few notable exceptions, the reviews and books either clumped friendship with other interpersonal relationships when discussing the friendship-happiness association or did not include empirical studies in their reviews that specifically supported the association between friendship and

happiness. Those overcoming these issues did not focus on age or cultural differences and whether indices and types of friendships mattered when understanding the relationship between friendship experiences and happiness. Also, a burgeoning body of research has expanded the literature to all walks of life in the past decade. During this time, the investigation of the friendship-happiness association has also been observed in different cultures. Finally, although friendship and happiness as separate topics have been eloquently studied in a variety of disciplines resulting in numerous books, volumes, and handbooks, there was not a book dedicated only to the relationship between friendship and happiness that could advance future research on the topic. These were the empirical reasons why I undertook this project.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Esther Otten at Springer who has made this project possible. Her enthusiasm and support are very much appreciated. I also would like to thank Hendrikje Tuerlings for her great help in making this book possible. I must acknowledge the support and humor of my friends throughout the project, especially Sumner Sydeman, as I have missed many opportunities to hike and hang out with him while working on this book on friendship and happiness. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Sahar Razavi, for her never-ending support, great stuffed pasta, and patience as I have worked on this project.

I would also like to thank to all of the contributors. I was a lucky and happy editor because of the professionalism displayed by the contributing authors. They were not only enthusiastic about their chapters but also welcomed my comments and suggestions as they finalized their chapters. I strongly believe that the chapters in this volume will be a valuable source for friendship researchers in various disciplines.

I am proud of the chapters in this book not only because they represent top-notch reviews of the literature but also present findings from various cultures.

This book is divided into three major parts. Part 1, "Perspectives on Friendship and Happiness" focuses on the association of friendship with happiness from different perspectives. Chapters in this part of the book not only focus on the meaning of friendship and happiness but also emphasize why friends and friendship experiences are related to happiness in the respective fields. In Chap. 1, Lynch explores the topic from a philosophical perspective, highlights how philosophical concepts have influenced the topics studied in the psychological literature, and suggests that friendship and happiness share similar features. In Chap. 2, Greco, Holmes and McKenzie provide a sociological approach to the topic and argue that the relationship between friendship and happiness depends on the social conditions in which friendship is experienced. Greco and her colleagues also underscore how a sociological perspective could enhance our understanding of the topic. Next, Lewis, Al-Shawaf, Russell and Buss (Chap. 3) present an evolutionary account on the topic by focusing on the functions of friendships. Lewis and his colleagues differentiate same- and cross-sex friendships, highlight the costs and benefits specific to each type of friendship, and propose evolutionarily inspired strategies to maximize the emotional benefits one might accrue from these friendships. In Chap. 4, Saldarriaga, Bukowski, and Greco offer a psychological perspective on the topic and argue that the friendship-happiness association represents a bidirectional dynamic process. The authors also

provide directions for future research and emphasize the importance of interventions that could be developed to enhance the well-being of individuals.

Part 2, “Friendship and Happiness Across the Lifespan” provides state-of-the-art reviews of the literature across all walks of life and on relatively new lines of research such as social media. Chapters providing a review of the literature in different age groups offer a brief historical context, theoretical bases, measures commonly used to assess the constructs, and a review of the existing literature, as well as highlight the current limitations of the literature and suggest directions for future research. In Chap. 5, Holder and Coleman review the literature on children and emphasize recent advances in the measurement of children’s well-being. The authors also call for research on the relationship between imaginary friendships and happiness among children. Next, Bagwell, Kochel, and Schmidt (Chap. 6) provide an eloquent review on the topic in adolescence. Bagwell and her colleagues note the limited empirical attention given to the friendship-happiness association in this age group and provide specific directions for future research. In Chap. 7, Demir, Orthel, Özdemir, and Özdemir review the topic, focusing on young adults, and show that the associations of friendship quality and satisfaction with happiness were stronger than that of friendship quantity, but the importance of friendship in this age group is dependent on one’s relationship status. The next chapter (Chap. 8) by Fiori and Denkla focuses on the topic among middle-aged adults and shows that friendship is a robust correlate of happiness in this age group. However, Fiori and Denkla show that this association might change depending on context and gender, and emphasize the need to compare midlife adults of different ages as a potential moderator. In Chap. 9, Adams and Taylor show that friendship experiences are positively associated with happiness in old age and argue that interventions focusing on ways to continue or increase friendship in this age group could promote successful aging.

The reviews of the literature across the lifespan collectively support the idea that friendship is related to happiness regardless of the ways the constructs were assessed. However, these reviews did not focus on cross-sex friendship and friendship in the social media as they relate to happiness. I decided to include the next two chapters in this part of the book because they address these issues among adolescents, emerging and young adults. In Chap. 10, Procsal, Demir, Doğan, Özen, and Sümer review the literature on cross-sex friendship by highlighting its similarities and differences from same-sex friendship and argue that cross-sex friendship is related to happiness in light of past theoretical work. Across three studies, they conclude that cross-sex friendship quality is a robust correlate of happiness regardless of the way happiness is assessed and the association is similar for men and women in two different cultures.

In Chap. 11, Manago and Vaughn argue that social media produce what they call a customized sociality that provides more control in one’s interactions favoring one’s personal needs and preferences. Although the authors review studies showing that social media use is related to happiness, the association is a complex one that depends on the characteristics of the consumers and their reasons for using social media.

Part 3, “Friendship and Happiness Across Cultures” provides reviews and empirical studies addressing the relationship between friendship and happiness in different cultures.

In Chap. 12, Willetto provides the first review in the literature on the topic among Navajos by relying on biographies and available empirical studies. Willetto emphasizes the need for research that directly focuses on the roles of friendship experiences in the happiness of Navajos. Next, Garcia, Pereira, and de Macedo (Chap. 13) provide a review of the literature in Latin America. Garcia and his colleagues show that friends and friendship experiences are considered as sources of happiness and emphasize that research on the topic in this continent is in its infancy. The authors also call for collaborations to enhance systematic research on the topic and highlight the steps taken to achieve this goal in Latin America. In Chap. 14, Li and Cheng review the associations of family relationships and friendships with happiness in Western cultures and the Asian context. Although friendship is related to happiness among Asians, Li and Cheng found that its impact is less salient, especially when family relationships are taken into account, when compared to findings obtained in Western cultures. The authors argue that this trend might change in the following years due to changes in the family system in Asian societies. The rest of the chapters in this section present recent empirical data on the topic in different age groups across various cultures. In Chap. 15, Sümer investigates the roles of attachment to mother and friendship in the life satisfaction of Turkish children. Sümer reports that friendship quality, not conflict, explains additional variance in life satisfaction above and beyond the influence of attachment to mother; friendship quality among girls is related to higher levels of life satisfaction only at low levels of attachment avoidance. In Chap. 16, Jose investigates the peer relations and happiness association in a longitudinal study among New Zealand adolescents. Jose reports that positive peer relations predicted an increase in happiness one year later whereas initial positive affect did not result in better peer relationships. In Chap. 17, Demir, Cuisiner, and Khoury show that satisfaction of basic psychological needs in a same-sex best friendship explain why friendship quality is related to happiness among college students in France and Lebanon. In the last chapter of this book, Demir, Achoui, and Simonek (Chap. 18) report that same-sex best friendship quality mediates the relationship between perceived responses to capitalization attempts and happiness among emerging adults in Algeria and Slovakia.



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Across the Life-Span and Cultures

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