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Are You Happy for Me? How Sharing Positive Events With Others Provides Personal and Interpersonal Benefits

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Sharing good news with others is one way that people can savor those experiences while building personal and interpersonal resources. Although prior research has established the benefits of this process, called *capitalization*, there has been little research and no experiments to examine the underlying mechanisms. In this article, we report results from 4 experiments and 1 daily diary study conducted to examine 2 mechanisms relevant to capitalization: that sharing good news with others increases the perceived value of those events, especially when others respond enthusiastically, and that enthusiastic responses to shared good news promote the development of trust and a prosocial orientation toward the other. These studies found consistent support for these effects across both interactions with strangers and in everyday close relationships.

Keywords: close relationships, capitalization, positive events, intimacy

An extensive literature documents the reasons why people seek contact with others when distressing events occur. Many years ago, Schachter and colleagues (e.g., Schachter, 1959) proposed that people affiliate with others in order to reduce uncertainty about threatening stimuli. More recent work has suggested that the mere presence of others may directly reduce stress, an effect that has been shown with both humans (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1988) and nonhuman animals (e.g., Stanton, Patterson, & Levine, 1985). The fact that people seek contact with supportive others in the face of stress is a staple of the extensive social support literature. Stress elicits support-seeking for diverse reasons; for example, people may desire material assistance, they may wish to unburden themselves of distressing thoughts and feelings, they may seek to recruit resources that bolster coping, or they may simply desire comfort and reassurance (for reviews, see Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996, or Taylor, 2007). Whether or not these support-seeking attempts are effective in reducing distress, it seems self-evident that the process of wanting to inform others about difficult circumstances is motivated by the desire to lessen that distress.

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Much less research has examined the sharing of positive news. This gap is noteworthy because people are just as likely to recount positive events as negative events with others (Rimé, 2007). In fact, Argyle and Henderson (1984) concluded that *sharing news of success with the other* was the number-one rule of friendship. The motives behind positive-event sharing differ from those behind negative-event sharing. In the latter, one seeks to diminish or alleviate the event. In the former, the goal more likely involves savoring (Bryant, 1989)—embellishing, retaining, and further benefiting from the event. Retelling positive experiences to others is one example of a process Langston (1994) named capitalization, whereby people seek additional advantage from positive events by marking and enhancing them in some way. In two diary studies, Langston showed that expressive responses to positive events—that is, seeking social contact or otherwise celebrating the event—were associated with higher levels of positive affect. Gable, Reis, Impett, and Asher (2004) expanded on Langston's research in several ways. Also using a within-person diary format, they showed that daily positive affect and life satisfaction were significantly higher on days in which participants communicated with others about the day's most positive personal event, over and above effects of the event itself and that day's negative events.

Because these studies were correlational, they did not directly test Langston's (1994) and Gable et al.'s (2004) interpretations, namely that the act of sharing positive events is causally responsible for these and other benefits of capitalization. It is also possible that people in a good mood have more opportunities to capitalize because they are more likely to be with others (L. A. Clark & Watson, 1988; Jaremka, Gabriel, & Carvallo, 2008). Similarly, people in a good mood may be more eager to tell others about their news because good moods lead them to anticipate a more favorable response (e.g., Johnson & Tversky, 1983; Schwarz, 2002). One purpose of the present research was to provide exper-

imental tests of the hypothesis that the act of telling another person about personal good fortune is causally responsible for some of the benefits associated with capitalization. A daily diary study was also conducted to determine whether these findings generalized to everyday life.

A second purpose of these studies was closer examination of the social context of recounting good news. For example, to what extent does the listener's response matter? In both dating and married samples, Gable et al. (2004) found that relationship well-being was higher among individuals who believed that their partners generally respond to capitalization attempts with active enthusiasm. Also, using a laboratory observation paradigm, Gable, Gonzaga, and Strachman (2006) showed that positive partner responses to capitalization attempts (as rated by the individual or independent observers) were associated with higher relationship well-being. Because these studies were correlational, however, they did not address the hypothesis of whether a positive response is causally responsible for the relational benefits of capitalization.

Capitalization Builds Personal Resources

Langston (1994) proposed three marking functions of capitalization attempts: "to make the events more memorable to the self, to let others know about them, and to maximize their significance" (p. 1123). Gable and Reis (in press) proposed a theoretical model of the capitalization process in which these three functions each and in combination contribute to the affective and relational benefits of capitalization. Gable et al. (2004) evaluated the first of these, finding that positive events were significantly more memorable when a larger number of others had been told about them. The other two hypothesized functions, which we refer to as building social resources and personal resources, have not been directly examined, although their potential relevance has been discussed (Gable & Reis, 2006, in press; Reis, 2007). It bears mention that although memorability and maximizing significance may be related, they should be considered conceptually distinct processes (Thompson, Skowronski, Larsen, & Betz, 1996). Gable et al. (2004) found that event positivity (rated at the time of the event) was only modestly correlated with memorability ($r = .41$).

Beginning with building personal resources, as Langston (1994) noted, one aim with capitalization attempts is to maximize the event's significance to the self. This idea suggests that when capitalization attempts succeed, the personal value of the target events may grow. Nearly all theories of self-evaluation suggest that validating (i.e., knowledgeable and approving) feedback from others may boost self-evaluation and desired identities (e.g., Crocker & Park, 2004; Gable & Reis, 2006; Shrauger, 1975; Tesser, 1986). For example, positive regard by others signals increased assessments of worth (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), especially when the positive regard is linked to intrinsic aspects of the self (Schimel, Arndt, Pyszczynski, & Greenberg, 2001).[1] In the present research, we are not so much concerned with global assessments of approval and self-worth as with the idea that capitalization experiences may enhance the personal value or significance of particular events and accomplishments. Several studies suggest that writing or talking into a tape recorder about positive events may contribute generally to positive affect and life satisfaction (e.g., Burton & King, 2004; Lyubomirsky, Sousa, & Dickerhoof, 2006), but in these studies, researchers did not examine evaluations of the events themselves nor did they consider the social impact of conversing with other persons and observing their response. One reason to consider event-specific evaluations as distinctive is that people's thoughts about their own experiences (especially affect-laden experiences) are more differentiated than simple global affect and self-esteem, including, for example, specific memories and separate representations of salient events (e.g., Collins & Read, 1994; Smith, 1998). Thus, if conversations with others bolster the personal significance of positive events, as both Langston's (1994) theory and our theory predict, it is important to show that they do so in a differentiated manner rather than by generally lifting affective states or all self-evaluations.

Furthermore, the idea that event-specific evaluations may be influenced by the capitalization process is consistent with social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), which posits that people acquire information for evaluating beliefs, abilities, and experiences from others, especially others whose response is deemed relevant (Suls, Martin, & Wheeler, 2002). Validation is one motive underlying social comparison: All other things being equal, we prefer to affiliate with others who are likely to approve of our world view (Goethals & Darley, 1977; Wheeler, 1974). Reis and Shaver (1988) proposed that validation is central to the development of intimacy following self-disclosure. Their model, supported by several experiments and diary studies (e.g., Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005; Lin, 1992; Reis, 2006), indicates that perceived understanding and validation signal a listener's awareness, recognition, and appreciation of core aspects of the self, as revealed in the act of self-disclosure. This leads us to predict that capitalization attempts are likely to maximize the personal significance of positive events only if the listener's response is perceived to provide relatively positive and specific support for the event in question. Indirect support for this prediction comes from Neff and Karney (2002, 2005), who demonstrated that although close partners may wish to be perceived positively in a general sense, they prefer to be seen accurately on specific attributes—that is, on relatively clear-cut attributes that are less amenable to motivated reinterpretation (see also Bosson & Swann, 2001). If so, a partner's perceived response to the recounting of good news, concrete events likely to be unambiguous, should be influential in determining whether the person successfully capitalizes on that event or not.

Capitalization Builds Social Resources

With regard to social benefits, the second marking function proposed by Langston (1994), it is well-known that people are motivated to present themselves to others in a favorable light (e.g., Tedeschi, 1981). Various social-psychological theories posit that people try to establish and maintain positive regard in the eyes of others, especially significant others (e.g., Leary & Baumeister,

[1] To be sure, extensive research suggests that this tendency may be moderated by factors such as self-esteem (e.g., Deutsch & Solomon, 1959), contingent self-esteem (e.g., Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), and consistency with self-conceptions (e.g., Swann, 1990). However, we are concerned here not with praise per se, which may or may not be discounted, but rather with positive regard that is unambiguously linked to personal good news that an individual chooses to share with another person. Presumably this lessens the likelihood of discounting.

2000; Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006; Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979). Thus, to the extent that people expect others to be pleased for their personal good fortune, they may anticipate a boost in stature or, in other words, more favorable reflected appraisals (Beach & Tesser, 1995; Tesser, Millar, & Moore, 1988). Moreover, sharing good news with another person is likely to initiate an interaction sequence in which further positive affects are experienced and shared (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994; Reis & Gable, 2003; Rimé, 2007), a process likely to help satisfy belonging and relatedness needs.

For capitalization attempts to be successful, as mentioned above, the partner's response must be perceived as recognizing and appreciating the good news, as well as its personal significance for the teller. This is not always the case. A conversation about personal good fortune may foster envy (Tesser et al., 1988; Scinta & Gable, 2005), it may announce or amplify conflicts of interest between the self and the partner (Carmichael, 2005), or it may allow partners to display indifference or distance. Thus, the benefits of marking good news by informing others are likely to depend on the listener's perceived response. In close relationships, this is an example of perceived partner responsiveness or, in other words, the belief that relationship partners are aware of important aspects of the self and willing to be attentive and supportive (Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004). Although perceived partner responsiveness is typically investigated in the context of conflicts of interest and other negative events, positive events are also relevant, in that they afford an opportunity for partners to display awareness of and a willingness to support, in both words and behavior, aspirations and goals (Reis, 2007; Rusbult, Kumashiro, Stocker, & Wolf, 2005). Partners may even "bask in reflected glory" by including the other's good news in the self, one sign of cognitive and behavioral interdependence in close relationships (Aron & Aron, 1997). Consistent with this reasoning, Gable et al. (2004) found that romantic relationships were higher in commitment, satisfaction, trust, intimacy, and daily positive activities between partners and lower in daily conflict when partners perceived each other to be actively supportive of personal good fortune, as opposed to passive, disinterested, or disparaging.

Further reason to consider sharing of positive events as a basis for perceived partner responsiveness may be found in theories of self psychology. For example, Kohut (1971) suggested that beginning in infancy and continuing throughout life, humans have a need for significant others to validate the intrapsychic processes by which they construct meaning. Kohut referred to the process by which empathic caregivers actively express admiration for and engagement with the self's accomplishments as mirroring. Mirroring, he theorized, facilitates a healthy sense of self and triggers mental representations of self as valued by the other (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002). Thus, people develop positive meta-perceptions ("the perception of what others think of the self;" Kenny, 1994) by monitoring others' affective and verbal responses to one's needs, desires, and accomplishments. Recent research on emotional communication (e.g., emotional contagion, e.g., Hatfield et al., 1994; rapport, e.g., Levenson & Ruef, 1997; and mirror neurons and attunement, e.g., Gallese, Eagle, & Migone, 2007) suggests that these processes are pervasive and influential in social interaction, although usually operating outside of awareness. For present purposes, it is important to note that positive achievements and attributes can provide a basis for mirroring responses and, thus, for the perception of partner responsiveness.

If the capitalization process involves perceived responsiveness to the self, as we propose, the effects of enthusiastic responses should be particularly evident in intimacy-related outcomes, such as trust and self-disclosure, over and above general sentiments, such as liking and perceived friendliness. Extensive research indicates that people are willing to confide in others when they expect that those others will respond supportively (see Reis & Patrick, 1996, for a review). Although traditionally this expectation is derived from interactions involving ever-escalating, mutual sharing of private or sensitive information (Altman & Taylor, 1973), it follows from the above that an attentive, enthusiastic response to good news would engender confidence that the listener will respond supportively to intimate self-disclosure. Similarly, Simpson (2007) has proposed that trust follows the attribution that a partner values the relationship with oneself. Enthusiastic responses to capitalization attempts likely foster such attributions. They also foster the belief that the listener is not envious (or at least is willing to suppress any envy that is experienced). Thus, we hypothesize that successful capitalization attempts (i.e., descriptions of personal good news that receive an enthusiastic response) would increase intimacy and trust, whereas unsuccessful attempts would decrease intimacy and trust.

Gable et al.'s (2004) results also suggest that positive responses to capitalization attempts will build social resources not only for the person recounting good news but also for the person providing the enthusiastic response. This was another focus of our research. Whereas prior research has shown the benefits of responsive listening for the speaker (e.g., studies of impression management or self-disclosure), we are aware of no research that demonstrates benefits for the provider of enthusiastic feedback, especially in the context of positive news. Existing research demonstrates that providing social support may be beneficial (e.g., Deci, La Guardia, Moller, Sheiner, & Ryan, 2006; Iida, Seidman, Shrout, Fujita, & Bolger, 2008), but as noted earlier, responding to negative situations differs from responding to positive situations in several ways.

For several reasons, we predicted that enthusiastic listeners are likely to be perceived as supportive and involved, thereby accruing a social resource: (a) As noted above, perceived responsiveness facilitates closeness, which research on communal relationships has shown would in turn engender willingness to provide for the other (M. S. Clark & Mills, 1993); (b) reciprocity of helping is a common norm in social interaction (Gouldner, 1960); and (c) to the extent that capitalization attempts are successful, the speaker is likely to experience greater affinity for the listener (Gable et al., 2004), which predicts higher levels of generosity and prosocial behavior (e.g., Eisenberg & Miller, 1987).

Capitalization and Positive Emotion

Although our theory overlaps in certain respects with Fredrickson's (1998) broaden and build model, there are important differences. Fredrickson argued, with considerable empirical support, that positive affect broadens thought–action repertoires (that is, creates openness in cognition, affect, and action) and builds social resources by making the individual a more desirable partner. Existing research has focused on broadening in the sense of widening the individual's perspective (e.g., Fredrickson & Brani-

gan, 2005) rather than on deepening feelings about a particular event. Also, relatively little research has directly examined the building of social resources (but see Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006). Rather than resulting directly from positive affect, we propose that in capitalization, people who have experienced good fortune (and who may or may not be in a good mood at the moment the attempt begins) may seek to further savor their experience. Although capitalization likely contributes to the upward spiral in well-being that Fredrickson's model describes (Gable et al., 2004), the research reported in this article includes both experimental conditions and mood covariates intended to demonstrate that the capitalization process goes beyond elevated positive affect.

The Present Research

This article reports findings from four experiments and one daily diary study designed to explore two interpersonal and intrapersonal benefits of retelling one's good fortune to another person. The first two experiments and the daily diary study were concerned with Langston's (1994) proposal that retelling increases the personal significance of positive events. Experiment 1 compared retelling with three other conditions: a writing condition in which participants wrote an essay about their personal positive event, a positive mood condition in which participants viewed a humorous 8-min video, and a word search (control) condition. Experiment 2 tested our hypothesis that an attentive and enthusiastic response is needed for maximizing the personal significance of retelling. In one condition, confederates were trained to respond in an active constructive manner, that is, as detailed below, with engagement and enthusiasm. In the other condition, confederates were passive and disengaged without being hostile. This hypothesis was examined in the daily diary study by asking whether changes from daily ratings of events to a rating collected from 2 days to 14 days later were related to capitalization attempts.

The final two experiments and the daily diary study addressed the social benefits that are part of the capitalization process. In Experiment 3, we examined the proposition that the capitalization process engenders trust, perceived responsiveness, and the willingness to self-disclose. In this study, we compared the effects of attentive, enthusiastic responses to shared fun, as well as a control condition. Finally, in Experiment 4, we explored the hypothesis that capitalization builds social resources for the responsive listener. In this field experiment, participants were given an opportunity to display generosity to an interviewer who had responded in an enthusiastic way or, in control conditions, who had been neutral, who had been disparaging, or who had offered a piece of candy (meant to induce positive mood). We examined the same general hypothesis in the daily diary study by focusing on interactions between the participants and a specific close other.

Prior capitalization research has been conducted with participants and partners in ongoing relationships, but the present research relied on participants and experimental confederates who were previously unacquainted and who expected no further interaction. We did so for several reasons. First, existing models of capitalization give no special priority to close partners. Although close others are more salient and significant to the self than are strangers (Carmichael, Tsai, Smith, Caprariello, & Reis, 2007), in principle, recounting personal events to an enthusiastic listener is expected to be beneficial across most social connections. Second, we wanted to show that these effects could be created experimentally, by manipulating interactions between participant and partner. Although this sort of responsiveness can be manipulated in laboratory studies with close partners (e.g., by having partners rewrite responses scripted by the experimenter), it is substantially more difficult to make such responses credible, in part because relationship partners tend to have relatively stable expectations about each other (as shown in Gable et al., 2004, Studies 2 and 3, and Gable et al., 2006). Third, because of the behavioral and psychological interdependence that defines a close relationship, to some extent, each partner's individual good fortune has personal implications for the other (e.g., tangible rewards and costs, pride, basking in reflected glory). Thus, responses, positive or negative, might stem from personal implications of the event rather than a true outside listener's perspective. With strangers, the target event has no personal implications.

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 was designed to test our derivative of Langston's (1994) hypothesis that capitalization increases the personal significance of an event. Participants were asked to name the three best things that had happened to them in the past 2 years. One of these events was randomly chosen as the focal event for the rest of the study. To avoid ceiling effects, this selection was restricted so that the most positive event was never chosen. The remaining event became the nonfocal event and served as a within-person control. Because our theory indicates that benefits of capitalization derive from having a responsive listener, participants in one condition recounted the focal event to a listener who was always attentive and enthusiastic. This condition was contrasted with three other conditions: an expressive writing condition, to control for reliving the details of and expressing feelings about the focal event (in prior research, expressive writing about both positive and negative events has been shown to foster a variety of personal and interpersonal benefits, in theory because expressive writing creates an opportunity for reflection, which fosters improvement, e.g., Burton & King, 2004; Pennebaker, 2003; Slatcher & Pennebaker, 2006); a positive mood condition, to control for mood effects; and an activity control condition, to account for time engaged in a task. The primary hypothesis was that the capitalization condition would show a significant increase in evaluations of the focal event relative to the nonfocal event but that this would not occur in the three other conditions.

Method

Participants. One hundred ten undergraduates participated in exchange for course extra credit. Five participants were excluded, as their responses on the dependent variable (difference between change scores for focal and nonfocal event) were greater than 3 *SD* from the mean. One additional participant was excluded for failing to attend to stimulus materials. This resulted in 104 participants (77 female, 27 male; $M_{age} = 20.06$ years; responsive feedback condition: $n = 30$; writing condition: $n = 27$; video condition: $n = 21$; word search: $n = 26$).

Procedure. Upon entering the lab, participants rated their current mood. They were then provided with the following instructions to select three of their best positive events:

> Please take a moment to think about the things that have made you happiest within approximately the last 2 years. These can include concrete events such as going on vacation, getting a date with someone you like, and so on. They can also include states of mind such as connecting with God or some higher power, recovering from a period of depression, and so on. Please list below three of these positive events or states of mind that stand out to you.

Participants then rated the positivity of each event and, as described above, randomly selected either the second or third most highly rated event to be the focal event. This was done by having participants chose one of three slips of paper marked 1, 2, or 3 from a fishbowl. If 1 was selected, participants were told this would not be the discussion topic, and they were asked to chose another slip. No participants indicated awareness that their top-rated event had been intentionally excluded. After selecting the focal event, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. All conditions were arranged to last for 8 min.

Responsive feedback. Participants in this condition were told they were interacting with interviewers who were undergoing training for a future project in which they would conduct interviews about positive events. Participants were videotaped discussing the focal event with the interviewer, who had been trained to provide interested, enthusiastic feedback. Interviewers were always the opposite sex from the participants and were not aware of the hypotheses.

Expressive writing. Participants in this condition wrote an essay that no one was expected to see. In this essay, participants were asked to explore their very deepest emotions and thoughts about their focal event.

Positive mood. Participants in this condition watched a humorous segment from *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*.

Activity control. Participants in the word search condition spent the allotted time looking for words in a puzzle. At the conclusion of the task participants rerated their three events and current mood. Participants in the responsive feedback condition also rated the interviewer and the interaction. Finally, all participants were probed for suspicion with a funnel debriefing.

Measures.

Mood. The Brief Mood Introspection Scale (Mayer & Gaschke, 1988) was used to measure positive and negative mood. The Brief Mood Introspection Scale consists of 8 positive (i.e., *happy*) and 8 negative (i.e., *grouchy*) mood adjectives. Items were scored from 1 (*definitely do not feel*) to 4 (*definitely feel*). Cronbach's alpha was .80 at Time 1 and .84 at Time 2.

Event ratings. Participants rated their current feelings about each event by placing an X along a horizontal 17.10 cm line with anchors at the beginning (*pretty good*), middle (*great*), and end (*the best thing that ever happened to me*). This method was used to prevent participants from remembering their initial responses when rerating their events after the 8-min task.

Interviewer evaluation. Participants in the responsive feedback condition rated the interviewer with an adapted version of the 12-item Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts (PRCA; Gable et al., 2004) measure. This scale taps four prototypical responses to capitalization attempts varying in terms of how active, versus passive, and how constructive, versus destructive, they are. Crossing the two dimensions results in four response types: active–constructive (AC; expressing enthusiastic, positive support), active–destructive (AD; expressing derogatory responses), passive–constructive (PC; showing benign disinterest), and passive–destructive (PD; distancing and otherwise failing to respond). Each response type was rated from 1 (*not at all true of our interaction*) to 7 (*very true of our interaction*).

Observational coding. Two independent coders rated the positivity of participants' three events on a scale from 1 (*moderately positive*) to 5 (*one of the most positive things that could happen*). Raters were unaware of participants' ratings. Coders also made one global rating of the interviewer by completing the PRCA scale (Gable et al., 2004).

Expressed positivity. Conversations in the responsive feedback condition were transcribed. Two independent coders rated participants' expressions of happiness and liveliness from 0 (*absent*) to 4 (*extreme*). Written positive event descriptions from the expressive writing condition were also rated by two independent coders for expressed happiness and liveliness. In the capitalization condition, reliabilities for happiness and liveliness were αs = .74 and .76, respectively. In the written condition, the comparable values were .72 and .68.

Results

Manipulation check. To examine the effectiveness of the responsive feedback condition manipulation, we compared participants' ratings of the confederate's AC feedback with each of the three other feedback types (PC, AD, and PD). Participants perceived the confederate as responding primarily with enthusiastic feedback ($M_{AC} = 6.04$, $M_{PC} = 2.17$, $M_{AD} = 1.22$, $M_{PD} = 1.20$), ts(29) > 18.01, ps $< .001$. We further examined differences between coders' ratings of the confederate's AC feedback with each of the three other feedback types. Like the participants, coders detected more AC feedback from the confederate than from the other response types ($M_{AC} = 5.41$, $M_{PC} = 1.31$, $M_{AD} = 1.01$, $M_{PD} = 1.17$), ts(29) > 33.07, ps $< .001$.

Hypothesis test. All analyses reported below included sex as a between-subjects factor. Because sex did not produce significant effects, it is not discussed further. To compare the effect of the manipulation on evaluations of focal and nonfocal events, we computed two change scores by subtracting the premanipulation rating from the postmanipulation rating separately for both events. We then computed the difference between these two change scores by subtracting the nonfocal change score from the focal change score: (focal postrating − focal prerating) − (nonfocal postrating − nonfocal prerating). Doing so allows us to examine the specific effect of the interaction on ratings of the focal event rather than global changes. This difference of differences served as the dependent variable, with positive values indicating greater increases in positivity from premanipulation to postmanipulation for the focal event, compared with the nonfocal event. It might be noted that the resulting values are mathematically identical to a 4 (condition) × 2 (event) × 2 (pre–post) interaction.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a planned contrast comparing the responsive feedback condition with the other three conditions was significant, $F(1, 100) = 5.39$, $p < .05$ (feedback condition $M = 1.03$, writing condition $M = -0.12$, positive mood condition $M = -0.62$, control condition $M =$

0.11).[2,3] Figure 1 displays change in event evaluations from premanipulation to postmanipulation separately for focal and nonfocal events within each condition. Simple effects tests comparing change for focal and nonfocal events were significant only in the enthusiastic condition, $F(1, 100) = 5.43$, $p < .05$; other Fs(1, 100) < 1.42, *ns*.

Mood as a covariate. To examine the possibility that general mood change is the driving force underlying these effects, we conducted a one-way ANOVA on overall mood change from prerating to postrating. This analysis revealed an effect of condition, $F(3, 103) = 9.60$, $p < .001$. The responsive feedback condition produced a significantly greater increase in positive mood ($M = 0.61$) than did the other three conditions ($M_{writing} = 0.16$, $M_{mood} = 0.22$, $M_{control} = 0.15$). However, the planned contrast used to test the hypothesized effect of condition on change in event ratings remained significant after covarying for overall mood change, $F(1, 99) = 3.94$, $p = .05$. We obtained virtually identical results when controlling separately for positive and negative mood.

Observational coding. To address the possibility that the randomly chosen focal event may have been more objectively positive than the nonfocal event, two coders rated the positivity of each event. A paired samples *t* test on the average of their ratings revealed that the nonfocal event was marginally more positive ($M = 2.75$) than the focal event ($M = 2.57$), $t(103) = 1.73$, $p < .09$. Thus it is unlikely that the obtained results were due to positivity differences between the events.

Participant responses were transcribed from the responsive feedback and writing conditions. Two independent coders rated participants' expressions of happiness and liveliness from these transcripts. The two raters' codes were combined to create one happiness score and one liveliness score. There were no significant differences between the two conditions in expressions of happiness, $t(53) = 0.08$, *ns*. However, those in the responsive feedback condition were rated as more lively ($M = 1.68$) than those in the writing condition ($M = 1.24$), $t(53) = 2.33$, $p < .05$. This suggests that the greater activation produced by social interaction, compared with solitary writing, may play a role in the capitalization experience.

Brief Summary of Experiment 1 and Introduction to Experiment 2

Experiment 1 demonstrated that socially sharing, not simply reliving, positive events enhanced feelings about these events. It remains unclear whether these benefits are attributable to socially sharing one's news or to receiving an enthusiastic response. To be sure, although people probably expect positive reactions when they relate good news to another person, this expectation is often unfulfilled. For example, listeners may respond with envy, disparagement, criticism, or disinterest. We hypothesized earlier that these different responses would be unlikely to yield the same benefits as an enthusiastic (positive) response would. Experiment 2 was designed to test this hypothesis. In this study, all participants shared a positive event with an interviewer. Responses were manipulated so that participants received AC feedback (identical to the responsive feedback condition in Experiment 1) or neutral disengaged (PC) feedback. We used disengagement rather than negativity to rule out undermining effects of interpersonal antipathy (Pasupathi & Rich, 2005). We did not include a no-feedback control condition because in Experiment 1, a similar condition (expressive writing) showed no increase in ratings of the focal event. The primary hypothesis was that ratings of the focal event relative to the nonfocal event would increase following conversation in the active–enthusiastic condition but not in the passive condition.

Method

Participants. One hundred and three participants completed the study in exchange for course extra credit. We used four confederates, distributed equally across conditions. Data from one female confederate ($n = 16$) were excluded because she failed to carry out the manipulation properly.[4] Four participants were excluded as outliers because their scores were more than three standard deviations from the mean on the dependent variable (change in event evaluation). Thus, 83 participants (63 female, 20 male; $M_{age} = 20.44$ years) were included in analyses.

Procedure. All participants interacted with opposite-sex confederates whom they believed to be interviewers-in-training for a future study, as in the responsive feedback condition of Experiment 1. Following a brief overview and consent procedures, participants followed the same protocol as in Experiment 1. They rated their current mood, selected three of their best positive events, rated their current feelings about each event, and randomly selected one event to discuss with the interviewer. As in Experiment 1, in order to avoid ceiling effects, the event selection was rigged so that the highest rated event was never chosen.

Following the drawing, participants were introduced to an opposite-sex interviewer, and a 7-min videotaped interaction began. Participants were instructed to tell the interviewer about their event and were randomly assigned to receive either AC or PC feedback throughout the interaction. The AC feedback condition was identical to Study 1. The confederate responded with enthusiastically positive verbal and nonverbal feedback, including making statements such as "I'm really happy for you" or "That's great," while smiling, nodding, making eye contact with the par-

[2] We also conducted this analysis including the 6 participants who had been excluded from the analyses. In this instance, the hypothesized contrast was marginally significant, $F(1, 106) = 2.68$, $p < .11$, but the means were in the predicted direction and highly similar to the original analysis (feedback condition $M = 1.17$, writing condition $M = 0.18$, positive mood condition $M = -0.56$, control condition $M = 0.52$). Including these 6 participants substantially increased the error term for calculating the effect (as would be expected given their status as outliers).

[3] Difference scores may conceal differences in prediscussion scores, which potentially could have created the overall effect. A one-way ANOVA revealed no differences between conditions, $F(3, 100) < .86$, *ns*, on the preratings, ruling out this possibility.

[4] The excluded female confederate's AC and PC feedback conditions differed minimally, compared with the other confederates' AC and PC feedback conditions. The eight observer codes rating the confederate's behavior were averaged to create a composite and were submitted to a 2 (feedback) × 4 (confederate) ANOVA, with a contrast comparing the excluded confederate with the other three confederates, $F(1, 98) = 11.12$, $p < .01$. The excluded confederate's AC feedback ($M = 1.71$) was significantly less differentiated from her PC feedback ($M = 0.66$), compared with the other three confederates' AC feedback ($M = 1.47$) and PC feedback ($M = -0.14$).

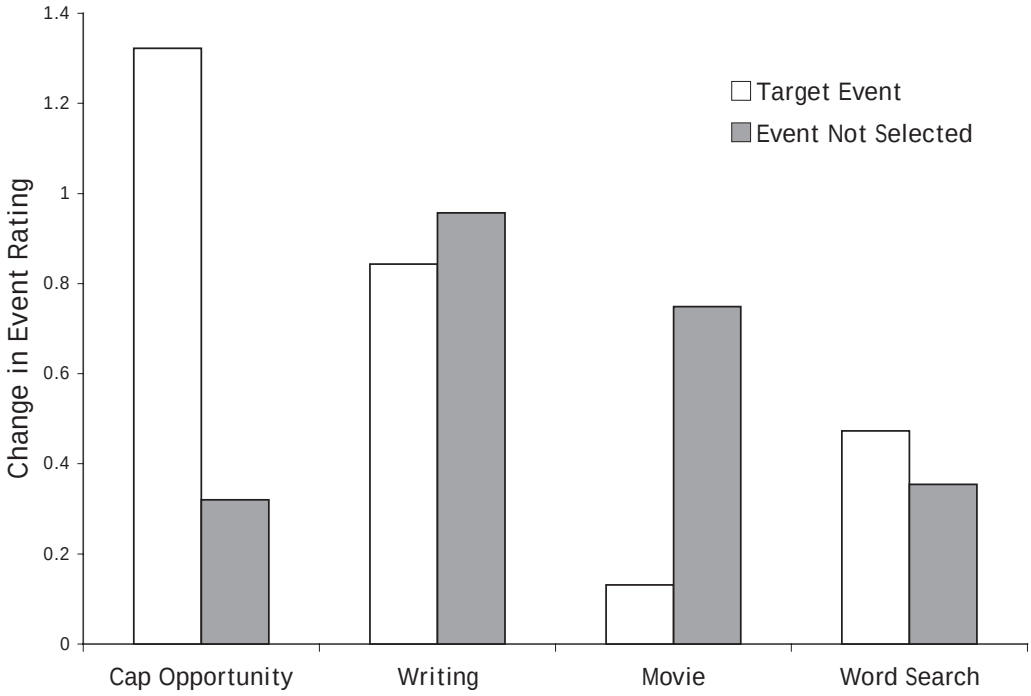

Figure 1. Changes in ratings of events discussed and not discussed in the experimental conditions. Cap = capitalization.

ticipant and keeping an open posture. In the PC feedback condition, confederates responded with neutral or withdrawn feedback. Verbal responses may have included "Oh yeah" or "I understand," communicated in a dry, unchanging tone of voice. Nonverbal responses included slouching, yawning, fidgeting, and avoiding eye contact with the participant.

One of three confederates (2 male, 1 female) played the role of interviewer. Confederates had been trained to provide either AC or PC feedback by practicing with other undergraduates while being observed and instructed by the authors. Confederates were unaware of the hypotheses.

At the end of the interaction, participants rerated their current feelings about all three positive events and their current mood. Participants also provided ratings about the interviewer and the interaction. Finally, participants were probed for suspicion with a funnel debriefing.

Materials. All measures for assessing mood, current feelings about the event, perceptions of the interviewer's feedback, and feelings about the interviewer were identical to Experiment 1. For the mood measure, Cronbach's alpha was .86 at Time 1 and .88 at Time 2. For the PRCA measure, alpha was .79. Three additional questions were added to evaluate the interviewer (How much did you like the interviewer, how much would you like to interact with him/her again, and how likely is it that you would be friends with this person?), each rated on a 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*very true*) scale. These items were combined into a composite interviewer evaluation score ($\alpha = .93$).

Observational coding. Three independent judges watched each interaction and rated the interviewer on seven characteristics (affection, boredom, disengagement, engagement, enthusiasm, humor, and joy), using a 0 (*absent*) to 4 (*extreme/high levels*) scale. Coders could hear both sides of the conversation, but their view of the participant was obstructed. They were instructed to focus only on the confederate's behavior. Ratings were made every 30 s and then averaged across the entire 7-min session. The seven coded variables were combined to create a composite evaluation of confederate feedback (negatively worded adjectives were reversed; $\alpha = .97$). Coders also made one global rating of the interviewer by completing the PRCA scale; $\alpha = .89$.

Experiment 2 Results

Preliminary analyses. To demonstrate that the feedback manipulation was effective, independent samples *t* tests were conducted to compare the effect of feedback condition on both participant and observer-coded ratings of feedback. For both participants and independent observers, the AC feedback condition was perceived as more enthusiastically positive (participant $M = 4.91$, observer $M = 5.32$) than the PC condition (participant $M = 2.44$, observer $M = 1.85$), ts (100) ≥ 11.72, ps $< .001$. An independent samples *t* test on the composite coded variable revealed that the AC feedback condition was evaluated more positively ($M = 1.48$) than the PC feedback condition ($M = -0.12$), $t(81) = 23.32$, $p < .001$. Separate independent samples *t* tests on the seven individual observer codes all revealed the same pattern: The AC condition was consistently appraised more positively than the PC condition, $|t|$s (80) > 15.33, $p < .001$. Preliminary analyses indicated that including a factor representing different confederates did not interact with key study variables, so this factor was not included in subsequent analyses.

Hypothesis test. To test the hypothesis that AC feedback would enhance participants' perceptions of the event they had discussed, a 2 (feedback) × 2 (discussed) mixed ANOVA was conducted on change in evaluation (i.e., postdiscussion rating − prediscussion rating) of the two events. Positive values indicate increasingly positive appraisals of the event. The two-way interaction was significant, $F(1, 75) = 4.24$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 2).[5] For the event that had been discussed, participants displayed a greater positive increase in their evaluations following AC feedback ($M = 0.91$), compared with PC feedback ($M = 0.36$). The pattern was weaker and in the opposite direction for the event that had not been discussed (Ms = 0.71 and 1.10). The Feedback × Discussed × Sex interaction was not significant, $F(1, 73) < 1$, *ns*.

Mood as a covariate. As in Experiment 1, we examined whether positive affect, elevated from rewarding social interaction, contributed to the findings. The AC feedback condition produced relatively improved mood from preinteraction to postinteraction ($M = 0.33$), compared with the PC feedback condition ($M = 0.09$), $t(80) = 2.00$, $p < .05$. Partialling the effects of mood change, the 2 (feedback) × 2 (discussed) ANOVA still revealed a marginally significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 74) = 3.65$, $p = .06$. We obtained virtually identical results when controlling separately for positive and negative mood. In other words, the pattern reported above was not due to elevated mood.

Feelings about the confederate. In addition to feeling better about the event, the benefits of an enthusiastic positive response may carry over to feelings about the confederate. To test this possibility, we examined the effect of feedback condition on the interviewer evaluation composite. Participants in the AC feedback condition reported more favorable impressions of the confederate ($M = 3.89$), compared with participants in the PC feedback condition ($M = 2.29$), $t(81) = 8.46$, $p < .001$. The effect was not moderated by sex, $F(1, 79) < 1$, *ns*.

Mood was again controlled in a separate analysis, and the effect of feedback on interviewer evaluation remained significant, $F(1, 79) = 62.30$, $p < .001$. Again, we obtained virtually identical results when controlling separately for positive and negative mood. Thus, participants' favorable impressions of the confederate cannot be attributed to increased positive mood.

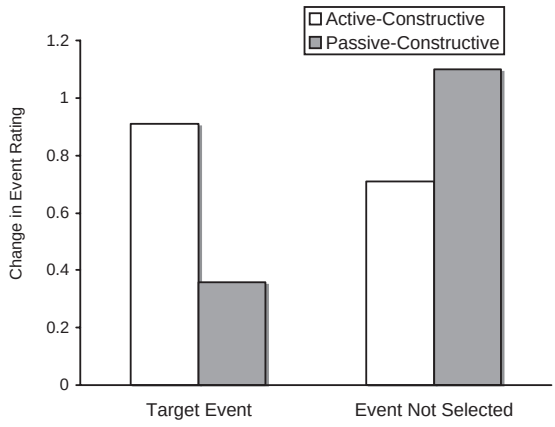

Figure 2. Changes in ratings of events discussed and not discussed in both experimental conditions.

Brief Summary of Experiment 2 and Introduction to Experiment 3

Experiment 2 demonstrated that increases in ratings of the personal meaningfulness of events should be attributed to the effects of responsive listening rather than the act of relating the event per se. Even when positive mood was controlled, enthusiastic feedback led participants to increase their ratings of the focal event more than in the passive feedback condition. This hypothesis was examined in an everyday life context in Study 5. We defer discussion until the general discussion section.

Experiment 2 also revealed that enthusiastic responses to capitalization attempts led to more favorable evaluations of the partner. Experiment 3 was designed to examine the interpersonal consequences of capitalization more closely. Researchers have previously examined the interpersonal benefits of positive interactions. For example, Fraley and Aron (2004) found that strangers who engaged in a humorous interaction, as compared with a nonhumorous interaction, reported greater feelings of liking for each other. As discussed earlier, we hypothesize that successful capitalization experiences, although likely to foster liking and enjoyment, promote the development of intimacy and trust in ways that simply enjoyable interactions, which do not involve responsive interaction, do not. The theoretical importance of this hypothesis lies in demonstrating that capitalization represents something more than general liking.

In this experiment, a capitalization condition was compared with fun interaction and neutral discussion (note-taking) conditions. Participants in the capitalization condition discussed a positive experience with a female confederate who responded with enthusiasm and interest. In the fun interaction, participants described Dr. Seuss pictures while the female confederate, who could not see the pictures, attempted to draw them (based on a task used by Fraley & Aron, 2004). Those in the notes (control) condition responded to a list of scripted questions asked by the female confederate about the participant's positive event, while the confederate (who responded only enough to not be impolite) took notes on the answers. We hypothesized that both the capitalization and fun conditions would create higher levels of liking than would the control condition; we expected little or no difference between the two experimental conditions on liking. More important, we predicted that participants in the capitalization condition would express more trust, perceived responsiveness, and openness in self-disclosure to the confederate than participants in the fun condition. We also predicted that this pattern of results would endure 1 week after the initial session.

[5] Including the 4 outliers, the hypothesized effect was marginally significant, $F(1, 79) = 2.63$, $p < .11$. However, means were in the predicted direction and very similar to the original analysis (focal event $M_{AC} = 1.11$, $M_{PC} = 0.49$; nonfocal event $M_{AC} = 0.89$, $M_{PC} = 1.19$). Including these 4 participants increased the error term for calculating the effect. To rule out the possibility that our results were due to prediscussion event ratings, we used a paired samples t test to compare prediscussion scores for the focal event and the nonfocal event. The difference was not significant, $t(77) = 1.58$, *ns*.

Method

Participants. Seventy-six undergraduates participated in exchange for extra course credit (57 female, 19 male; M_{age} = 19.83 years). One female participant did not return for the follow-up session. Data from 4 participants were excluded because of suspicion that the other participant was a confederate (3 from the capitalization condition, 1 from the notes condition).[6] Two women, unaware of the hypotheses, served as confederates, distributed randomly across conditions.

Procedure. Participants arrived individually at the lab and were told they would be interacting with another participant (actually a confederate). To reduce suspicion, confederates arrived 5 min late. The experimenter explained that the purpose of the study was to examine how people get to know each other. Participants and confederates were randomly assigned to interact in one of three conditions:

Capitalization condition. Participants were asked to think of one of the best events they had experienced in the past few years and relate it to the confederate. Confederates were trained to respond with interest and enthusiasm, as in Experiments 1 and 2, saying things such as, "Wow, that's really great!" and "What a great opportunity!" In addition, the confederates smiled, maintained eye contact with the participant, and asked questions about the participant's event.

Fun interaction. In this condition, participants were given four pictures from Dr. Seuss books and asked to describe the images to the confederate, who would then attempt to replicate the pictures. (Confederates were always assigned the drawing role so that participants would not feel embarrassed about their drawing ability.) Participants were instructed not to give literal descriptions (e.g., a house); they could only tell the confederate the direction to draw and the general shape and size of the object. This restriction was intended to facilitate amusement. Confederates were trained to be positive and friendly during the interaction, making comments such as "This is so funny!" and "I can't wait to see how these pictures compare!"

Notes condition. As in the enthusiastic response condition, participants were asked to think of one of the best events from the past few years. Confederates then asked a series of questions about the event from a list provided by the experimenter (i.e., "What makes your event so positive/important for you?"; "How did you feel at the time your event occurred? Why?"). The confederate remained neutral while asking the scripted questions and taking notes on the participant's event. If the participant did not provide enough detail or spoke too quickly, the confederate was instructed to ask the participant to say a little more or to repeat what was said.

After the interaction, both participant and confederate completed a packet of measures regarding the interaction, their feelings about each other, and their willingness to self-disclose. The confederate's questionnaire was used only to maintain the belief that she was an actual participant and was discarded afterward. The participant and the confederate each signed up for an individual follow-up session 1 week later. At the follow-up, participants were asked to spend 5 min writing a description of the interaction that had taken place during the initial session. This was done to attempt to make that interaction salient. They then completed the same questionnaire as in the initial session. After completing the questionnaire, participants were debriefed and given an opportunity to express suspicion and/or ask questions about the study.

Measures.

Positive and negative affect. Affect was measured with the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Participants rated how well a list of positive and negative adjectives described them at that moment, using a 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) scale. For positive affect, Cronbach's alpha was .90 (Time 1) and .92 (Time 2); for negative affect, Cronbach's alpha was .81 (Time 1) and .92 (Time 2).

Amusement. Three items were combined to measure amusement during the interaction ("I enjoyed my interaction with the other participant; This interaction was a lot of fun; Interacting with the other participant was entertaining and amusing"). These items were rated from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha was .93 at Time 1 and .92 at Time 2.

Liking for confederate. To measure liking, four items were combined ("I liked the other participant; I would like to interact with the other participant again; The other participant is someone I could see having as a friend; The other participant was warm"). Items were rated from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha was .92 at Time 1 and .87 at Time 2.

Closeness. The Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollon, 1992) was used to measure the subjective experience of closeness with the confederate. Participants choose one of seven increasingly overlapping circle pairs that depict the self and the interaction partner. The least overlapping pair of circles was coded 1; the most overlapping pair was coded 7.

Responsiveness. An 18-item scale (Reis, 2007) was used to measure perceptions of the confederate's responsiveness. This measure assesses perceived validation (e.g., "This person values and respects the whole package that is the 'real' me") and understanding (e.g., "This person is aware of what I am thinking and feeling"), and is scored from 1 (*not at all true*) to 9 (*completely true*). Cronbach's alpha was .97 at Time 1 and .98 at Time 2.

Self-disclosure. Eighteen items from Jourard's (1971) self-disclosure scale were used to measure participant's willingness to share personal details with the confederate. Each item asked whether participants would be willing to discuss a particular topic with the confederate. Items were grouped into three subscales based on norms provided by Jourard: highly personal topics (i.e., sexual experience), moderately personal topics (i.e., personal habits that bother you), and relatively impersonal topics (i.e., personal views on politics and the presidency). Participants rated their willingness to disclose these items from 1 (*completely unwilling*) to 7 (*completely willing*). For low, medium, and high self-disclosure, Cronbach's alphas were .84, .81, and .85 at Time 1 and .87, .85, and .84 at Time 2, respectively.

Trust. We created an 18-item measure of trust by combining items from Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna's (1985) Trust Inventory and Johnson-George and Swap's (1982) Measurement of Specific Interpersonal Trust. Items were endorsed on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale. Cronbach's alpha was .95 at Time 1 and .96 at Time 2.

[6] When these 4 participants are included in the analyses, all significant results remained significant, and all nonsignificant results remained nonsignificant.

Results

Initial session. All analyses used one-way ANOVAs with planned contrasts based on our hypotheses. The first contrast compared the capitalization and fun conditions with the notes (control) condition. The second contrast compared the capitalization and fun conditions with each other. Preliminary analyses indicated that a factor representing the two confederates did not interact with the key study variables, so this factor was not included in subsequent analyses.

As a manipulation check, we first examined ratings of amusement. This manipulation was successful. Participants in the fun interaction condition reported greater amusement than did participants in the capitalization condition, $F(1, 69) = 4.28$, $p < .05$. These two conditions combined also showed greater amusement than did the control condition, $F(1, 69) = 26.55$, $p < .001$. (Means for Study 3 results are reported in Table 1.)

As expected, participants in the two experimental conditions expressed greater liking for and closeness with the confederate than did participants in the neutral discussion condition: liking $F(1, 69) = 5.37$, $p < .05$; closeness $F(1, 69) = 13.06$, $p < .01$. Also as expected, there was no significant difference between the two experimental conditions in liking, $F(1, 69) = 0.01$, *ns*, or in closeness, $F(1, 69) = 0.00$, *ns*.

Our main hypothesis concerned responsiveness, trust, and the willingness to self-disclose. As hypothesized, participants in the capitalization condition reported significantly higher levels of responsiveness than did those who participated in the fun activity, $F(1, 69) = 7.89$, $p < .01$. Further, participants in the capitalization condition felt more trust toward the confederate than did participants in the fun condition, $F(1, 69) = 5.33$, $p < .05$.[7]

To examine condition differences in the three levels of self-disclosure, we conducted a 3 (condition) × 3 (level of self-disclosure) mixed-model ANOVA, representing the three conditions with the same two planned contrasts as in the earlier analyses. We hypothesized an interaction between the planned contrasts and the level, inasmuch as we expected conditions to influence the willingness to self-disclose on high intimacy, but not on low intimacy, topics. As shown in Figure 3A, there was a strong main effect for level of self-disclosure, $F(2,138 = 319.50$, $p < .001)$, such that participants were more willing to disclose on less intimate topics. The two experimental conditions combined did not differ significantly from the notes condition for the willingness to self-disclose, $F(2, 138) < 1$, *ns*. More important, as predicted, the capitalization versus fun contrast significantly interacted with level, $F(2,138 = 6.42$, $p < .005)$. Follow-up simple effects tests revealed that participants in the capitalization condition were significantly more willing to self-disclose on high- and medium-intimacy topics, Fs(1, 138) = 11.85 and 10.56, respectively (ps < .01), but not on the low-intimacy topics, $F(1, 138) < 1$, *ns*. This result alleviates the possible alternative explanation that capitalization participants were more willing to disclose because they had just done so, whereas fun participants had not.

To confirm that trust and liking revealed discrepant effects in the capitalization and fun conditions, we repeated the above contrast with measure (liking, trust) as a repeated measure. As expected, the Condition × Measure interaction was significant, $F(1, 69) = 6.24$, $p < .05$.

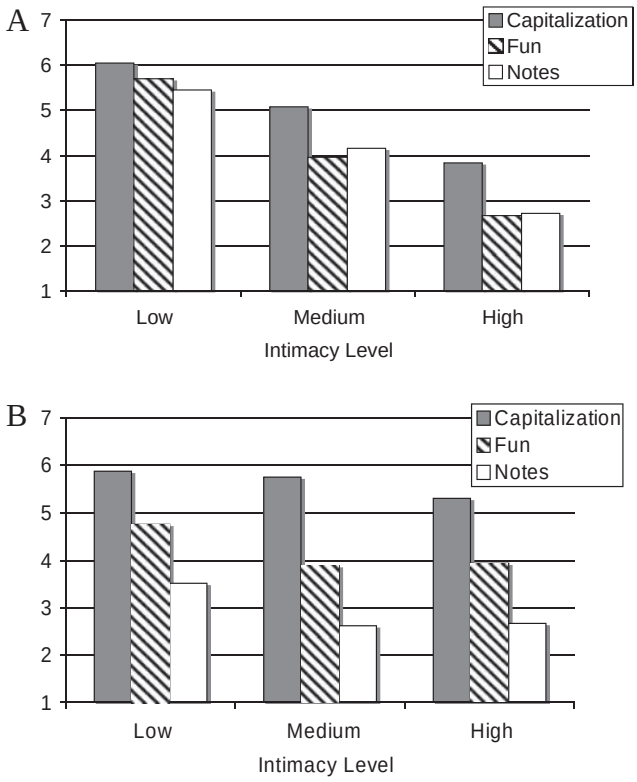

Figure 3. Willingness to disclose high, medium, and low intimacy material to the confederate immediately after the interaction (Figure 3A) and 1 week later (Figure 3B).

Table 1
Participant Ratings of the Confederate: Study 3

Category	Condition		
	Capitalization	Fun	Notes
	Initial rating		
Amusement	6.80	7.52	5.29
Liking	7.51	7.46	6.59
Closeness	4.05	3.93	2.64
Responsiveness	4.99	3.49	3.88
Trust	6.08	5.01	5.17
	Ratings at 1-week follow up		
Amusement	6.73	7.11	5.53
Liking	7.11	6.97	6.73
Closeness	3.80	3.48	2.58
Responsiveness	4.84	3.47	3.93
Trust	5.70	4.78	5.29

[7] The two experimental conditions combined did not differ significantly from the notes condition for trust and responsiveness, Fs(1, 69) ≤ 0.64, *ns*. Post hoc Tukey tests indicated that participants reported marginally higher trust and responsiveness in the capitalization condition than in the notes condition (ps < .12), suggesting than capitalization response had effects beyond self-disclosure per se. Tukey tests between the notes and fun conditions were not significant (ps > .20).

Follow-up session. At the follow-up session, participants again recalled greater amusement in the fun-interaction condition than in the enthusiastic-response condition, although this difference was not significant, $F(1, 68) = 1.93$, *ns*. These two conditions combined again differed from the control condition, $F(1, 68) = 19.77$, $p < .001$. There continued to be no significant difference between the capitalization and fun conditions in liking and feelings of closeness to the confederate, Fs$(1, 68) \leq 0.25$, *ns* (see Table 1 for means). Unlike results from the initial session, at follow-up there was no significant difference in liking between the two experimental conditions and the control condition, $F(1, 68) < 1$, *ns*. However, participants in the two experimental conditions did on average report feeling closer to the confederate than in the control condition, $F(1, 68) = 8.26$, $p < .01$.

At follow-up, perceptions of the confederate's responsiveness were again significantly greater for participants in the capitalization condition than for those in the fun-interaction condition, $F(1, 68) = 6.01$, $p < .05$, and the parallel difference was nearly significant for trust, $F(1, 68) = 3.94$, $p < .051$.[8] In addition, the 3 (condition) $\times$ 3 (level of self-disclosure) mixed-model ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between capitalization versus fun planned contrast and level of self-disclosure, $F(2, 136) = 4.64$, $p < .02$. Simple effects tests, as shown in Figure 3B, showed that participants in the capitalization condition were significantly more willing to self-disclose highly and moderately personal information, Fs$(1, 136) = 6.32$ and 6.22, respectively, (ps $< .05$), but not less personal information, $F(1, 136) < 1$, *ns*.

To confirm that trust and liking revealed discrepant effects in the capitalization and fun conditions, we again repeated the above contrast with measure (liking, trust) as a repeated measure. The Condition $\times$ Measure interaction was significant, $F(1, 68) = 9.29$, $p < .01$.

Brief Summary of Experiment 3 and Introduction to Experiment 4

Experiment 3 demonstrated that capitalization fosters perceived partner responsiveness. Although the capitalization and fun conditions both created a sense of amusement and liking for the confederate, only capitalization increased levels of perceived responsiveness, trust, and willingness to self-disclose on highly and moderately intimate topics. This evidence, along with the controls for ratings of positive affect, adds to our contention that the social resources accrued through enthusiastic listening are distinct of simple affective interpretations.

Experiment 4 was designed to show that capitalization may build social resources for a responsive listener even in an anonymous field setting. In this experiment, participants were approached on the street by an interviewer who asked them to describe the best thing that had happened in the past few years. After the experimenter gave one of four scripted responses, participants were surreptitiously given an opportunity to do something nice for the experimenter by returning an "accidental" overpayment. Theoretically, as argued earlier, enthusiastic responses are likely to heighten feelings of perceived responsiveness and are conducive to communal feelings, which in turn should engender a willingness to benefit the interviewer (M. S. Clark & Mills, 1993; Reis et al., 2004). In other words, responsive listening may build resources for the listener.

In this experiment, we contrasted enthusiastic responses with three other conditions. In a disparaging condition, the interviewer responded derisively to the participant's description. In a neutral condition, which was included to show that simply telling another about a positive event is not sufficient to promote prosocial behavior, the interviewer was plainly matter-of-fact. We also included a positive mood condition (offering a piece of candy) to compare the effects of capitalization experiences with positive moods. Prior studies have shown that positive moods induced by a similar manipulation may increase helping behavior (e.g., Isen & Levin, 1972). The hypothesis was that attentive, enthusiastic responses to the recounting of a personal positive event would produce more prosocial responses than the other conditions.

Method

Participants. Two hundred and fifty-five undergraduates took part, though due to language problems and experimenter errors, 7 participants were excluded from analyses, resulting in a sample of 248 (138 female, 109 male, 1 sex not recorded; $M_{age} = 20.40$ years).

Procedure. At three different college campuses, two female experimenters individually approached students who were alone and not talking on a cell phone.[9] The experimenters asked potential participants whether they would be willing to take part in a 5-min study about positive experiences in exchange for $1. Experimenters explained that the investigators were interested in the varieties of positive experiences people have and how they talk about them. Participants were then asked to recall one of their most positive events from the past few years and to describe the event to the experimenter while the conversation was audio-recorded for later coding. Experimenters responded to the participants' event in one of four randomly determined ways:

AC feedback. In this condition, the experimenter reacted with verbal and nonverbal expressions of enthusiasm, positivity, and engagement. For example, the experiment made comments such as "That's really great," and "How exciting," while smiling, making eye contact, and nodding.

Disparaging feedback. Experimenters in this condition engaged in conversation with participants, but explicitly questioned the positivity of the participants' events. Verbal and nonverbal expressions indicated difficulty comprehending the positivity of the event. For instance, the experimenter may have said, "What's so positive about that?" and "That's your best event?" in an incredulous voice, while furrowing her brow and frowning.

Neutral feedback. In this condition, the experimenter responded neutrally. No verbal or nonverbal expressions of positivity or negativity were given, and experimenters focused solely on taking notes, asking only whether participants had anything else to add.

Positive mood. This condition was identical to the neutral feedback condition, except that interviewers offered participants a small (bite-size) piece of candy. At the outset of the interaction, to make the gift personal, the experimenter mentioned that her grand-

[8] Once again the two experimental conditions combined did not differ significantly from the notes condition, Fs$(1, 68) \leq 1$, *ns*.

[9] One experimenter was aware of the study hypotheses; the other was not. Including this as a factor in the analyses did not alter the results.

mother had just sent her some candy and offered the participant a piece.

After sharing the positive event, participants completed a brief questionnaire about mood and feelings for the interviewer. Next, the interviewer handed the participant an envelope with $2 (rather than promised $1) and asked the participant to open it, sign the enclosed receipt, and return the receipt to the interviewer. After handing the envelope to the participant, the experimenter turned away to get a final questionnaire, ensuring that the participant found the extra dollar without the experimenter's notice. When the interviewer turned back to the participant, she noted whether the participant returned the additional dollar. If the participant returned the extra dollar, the interviewer expressed appreciation. If the participant did not return the extra dollar, the interviewer said nothing about the overpayment. Upon completion of the final questionnaire, participants were told the true purpose of the study and thanked.

Measures.

Affect. After the interview, participants were asked to complete the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale (Watson et al., 1988). This scale presented positive and negative adjectives for participants to rate how they felt at that moment. A 1 (*very slightly/not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) scale was used. Cronbach's alpha was .81 for positive affect and .82 for negative affect.

Experimenter evaluation. The experimenter's enthusiasm and warmth was rated on a 1 (*very slightly/not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) scale.

Results

Manipulation checks. Overall, there were between-conditions differences in both enthusiasm, $F(3, 242) = 21.80$, $p < .001$, and warmth, $F(3, 238) = 12.10$, $p < .001$ (degrees of freedom vary due to missing data). As shown in Table 2, a Tukey test showed that participants in the AC feedback condition rated the interviewer as more enthusiastic than did participants in the disparaging feedback condition or the neutral feedback condition ($ps \leq .01$) but did not rate the interviewer as significantly more enthusiastic than did the participants in the positive mood condition. For warmth, a Tukey test showed that participants in the AC feedback condition rated the experimenter as significantly warmer than did participants in the disparaging condition ($p < .001$) but did not rate the experimenter as significantly warmer than did participants in the neutral or positive mood conditions. Note that any lack of difference between AC feedback and the other conditions in ratings of enthusiasm and warmth works against the main hypothesis of this study.

Table 2
Participant Ratings of the Interviewer: Study 4

Category	Interviewer enthusiasm	Interviewer warmth
AC feedback	4.18_a	4.28_a
Disparaging	3.16_b	3.48_b
Neutral	3.77_c	4.08_a
Positive mood	$3.95_{a,c}$	4.18_a

Note. Means in the same column with different subscripts differ significantly from each other. AC = active–constructive.

Returning overpayment. We examined our hypothesis with chi-square analyses. Overall, there were significant differences among the four conditions in whether participants returned the overpayment, $\chi^2(3, 248) = 13.30$, $p < .05$. In the AC feedback condition, 68.3% of the participants returned the $1 overpayment. This percentage differed from the percentage of participants returning the money in the disparaging condition (35.9%), $\chi^2(1, 124) = 13.01$, $p < .001$; neutral condition (47.7%), $\chi^2(1, 125) = 5.44$, $p < .05$; and positive mood condition (50.8%), $\chi^2(1, 119) = 3.78$, $p = .052$. There were no significant differences among the other three conditions, with the exception of a marginal difference between the disparaging and positive mood conditions, $\chi^2(1, 123) = 2.78$, $p < .10$. There was no significant difference in the percentage of men (51%) and women (49%) who returned the $1, and sex did not significantly qualify the main results.

Brief Discussion and Introduction to Study 5

Study 4 demonstrated that the benefits of an enthusiastic response to reports of good news may be obtained even in minimally involved social interactions. Study 5 was designed to examine whether the specific findings obtained in Studies 1–4 would replicate in natural social interactions. That is, laboratory Experiments 1–4 were conducted to establish causal effects in capitalization attempts, with strangers and relatively brief interactions. In real life, most capitalization attempts probably involve well-acquainted, interdependent partners. Study 5 was a 2-week daily diary study in which participants were asked to report, each day, what their best and worst events of the day were, whether they had recounted those events to a target person or to another person, and how that target or other person had responded. Although our theoretical focus was on positive events, we also examined negative events for comparison purposes. Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, we hypothesized that recounting good news should lead to increased ratings of those positive events at the conclusion of the diary study. We also hypothesized that consistent with Studies 3 and 4, partner responses perceived to be enthusiastic and supportive would engender a more prosocial orientation toward that partner.

Method

Participants. Undergraduates were recruited for a diary study on "daily life events" in exchange for extra credit in one of their psychology courses. Of 217 participants who began the diary, only 3 completed fewer than 6 of the 14 diary days and were excluded from analyses. The remainder of the sample completed at least 9 of 14 days, resulting in a final sample of 214 (141 female, 73 male). Eighty-seven percent of the final sample completed 13 or 14 days. Participants averaged 19.89 years of age ($SD = 1.39$). Participants were run in 10 waves over 1 academic year, six during the fall semester and four during the spring semester.

Procedure. Participants were recruited via an online experiment board and attended an initial session in which they selected a target person, completed a set of questionnaires not relevant to the present report, and learned how to access and complete the online diary. Participants were asked to choose a target person with whom they had a meaningful relationship and anticipated communicating every day over the 14 days of the study. The following

targets were reported: 117 close friends, 65 romantic partners, 16 others, and 16 not reported. Beginning that evening and continuing for 13 consecutive evenings, participants were asked to log on to the study website before going to bed and to answer questions about the events of the day. After 14 days, participants returned to a follow-up session to complete the "postcast ratings" of their daily events. Follow-up sessions were held between 1 day and 3 days after the diary protocol had ended.

To encourage timeliness with the diary protocol, on each of the 14 diary days research assistants sent three reminder e-mails to participants containing a link to the diary website. The first reminder was sent at 6:00 p.m., asking participants to complete the diary at the end of the day. If participants had not done so by the following 1:00 a.m., research assistants sent a second reminder e-mail. Diary completion was checked once more at 9:00 a.m. the following morning, and participants who had not yet submitted their diaries were sent a final reminder to complete yesterday's diary by noon. As an incentive, participants earned two lottery tickets for each diary that was completed by 9:00 a.m. the next morning and one lottery ticket if the diary was completed by noon. Lottery tickets were entered into a drawing for cash prizes at the end of each semester.

On average, participants completed 95.5% of the daily diaries. Of the completed diaries, 89.3% were completed by 9:00 a.m. the following morning, 96.8% were completed by noon the following day. We examined the effect of time of diary completion on a set of key variables and found few differences between those who completed the diary before 9:00 a.m. and those who completed it before noon. In additional, to examine possible effects of distraction by other activities, we compared diaries completed in 10 min or less with those that took more than 10 min. There were no significant differences in the key variables.

Materials.

Event descriptions. Each day's diary asked participants to provide a brief, one or two sentence description of "the best thing that happened to you today." Immediately afterward, participants were asked to rate how positive the event was, compared with a typical event, and how important the event was. Both ratings had 1–7 scales, anchored from 1 (*good* and *not important*, respectively) to 7 (*outstanding* and *important*, respectively). The same procedure was followed for the day's "worst problem or concern." For the worst events, the rating scale anchors were (*bad* and *not important*, respectively) to 7 (*exceptionally terrible* and *important*, respectively).

Capitalization attempts. Participants were asked whether they had told their target person about their best event of the day. There were three response alternatives: "yes," "no," and "didn't need to, target was involved." This last category allowed us to exclude events involving the target person. Participants were also asked whether they had told someone other than the target about the event.

Support attempts. Participants were asked the same questions about their worst event of the day.

Responses to capitalization attempt. If they had told their target person about the best event of that day, participants evaluated their target person's response with Gable et al.'s (2004) PRCA scale. The same questions were asked if they had told someone else about the event. To minimize burden, we limited the PRCA to one item per subscale. The AC item was "He/she was very positive; he/she reacted in an enthusiastic and excited way when I told him/her about the event," the PC item was "I know he/she was happy for me, but he/she didn't say much and/or tried not to make a big deal about the event," the AD item was "He/she pointed out problems and downsides, and/or reminded me that there are probably bad aspects to the event too," and the PD item was "He/she seemed disinterested; I got the impression that he/she didn't care much about the event." Items were scored on a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) scale. As Gable et al. recommend, a total capitalization score (PRCA) was computed (AC − PC − AD − PD), with higher scores reflecting perceptions that the target responded more favorably ($\alpha = .55$).

Responses to support attempts. If they had told their target person about the worst event of that day, participants rated their target person's response on two questions: "How helpful was the help or support that your target person provided?" and "How comforting was the help or support that your target person provided?" The same questions were asked if they had told someone else about the day's worst event. Both items were rated on a 1 (*very little*) to 7 (*a great deal*) scale and were summed to provide a single score.

Prosocial orientation toward partners. In interdependence theory (e.g., Rusbult, Olsen, Davis, & Hannon, 2001), it is proposed that people reveal propartner orientations by their willingness to respond positively in conflictual or unpleasant situations. We represented this tendency in three questions drawn from Rusbult et al.'s (2001) model, assessing willingness to sacrifice, accommodation, and niceness, respectively: "Today, to what extent did you (or would you) consider giving up something important to yourself to help your target do something important for him/her," "Today, if she/he had done something rude or unpleasant (intentionally or unintentionally), to what extent would you be willing to put aside your hurt feelings and respond nicely?," and "Today, to what extent did you go out of your way to do something nice for him/her?" Each item was rated on a 1 (*very little*) to 7 (*a great deal*) scale, and these ratings were summed into a single index. Participants were also asked how close they had felt to the target on that day, rated on a 1 (*very little*) to 7 (*a great deal*) scale.

Postcasting. During the follow-up session, participants were given a list of the 14 positive and negative events they had reported during the diary portion of the study. They had not been forewarned about this. Participants were asked to rate each event according to how positively (or negatively) they felt about that event "now." The two scales were anchored as follows: for positivity, 1 (*pretty good*), 4 (*great*), and 7 (*one of the best things ever*); for negativity, 1 (*not that bad*), 4 (*pretty bad*), and 7 (*one of the worst things ever*).

Results

Data analysis strategy. We tested our hypotheses with hierarchical linear modeling (HLM 6.04; Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2007). HLM accounts for nonindependence due to each participant providing data for 14 diary days. In addition, HLM allows lagged analyses, examining the effect of today's events controlling for yesterday's values. Within-person effects across days were examined at Level 1, controlling for differences between persons at Level 2. For postcasting, HLM equations were created to model the relationship between postcasted event ratings

and, in separate analyses, (a) whether the participant had told someone about the event (i.e., the target or someone else) and (b) what that person's response was. If the participant had told both the target and someone else, those ratings were averaged. To be certain that our analyses would reflect telling, events in which the target person was involved were considered told only if participants had informed someone else; they were considered not told if no one else was informed. Separate analyses were used for telling and response ratings because no response ratings were collected when no one had been told about the event.

In the analysis for capitalization attempts, the Level 1 (within-person) equation was

$$\text{postcast}_{ij} = b_{0j} + b_{1j}(\text{daily\_how\_good}_{ij}) + b_{2j}(\text{tell\_anyone}_{ij}) + b_{3j}(\text{week}_{ij}) + r_{ij}, \quad (1)$$

where b_{0j} refers to the intercept (i.e., person j's average postcast ratings of the 14 daily events), whereas b_{1j}, b_{2j}, and b_{3j}, respectively, refer to slopes between the postcast ratings and how good that event had been rated on the day it occurred, whether they had told anyone about that event, and in which week of the 2-week diary period the event occurred. Error is represented by r_{ij}. Ratings of daily_how_good were centered on each participant's mean. Tell_anyone and week were dummy variables (0, 1) and not centered.

The Level 2 (between-persons) equations were as follows.

$$b_{0j} = g_{00} + u_{0j}. \quad (2)$$

$$b_{1j} = g_{10} + u_{1j}. \quad (3)$$

$$b_{2j} = g_{20} + u_{2j}. \quad (4)$$

$$b_{3j} = g_{30} + u_{3j}. \quad (5)$$

In the first Level 2 equation, g_{00} represents the average intercept for postcast ratings. In the remaining equations, g_{10}, g_{20}, and g_{30} represent the average day-level intercepts and slopes for daily event ratings, daily telling, and week, respectively. Random error is reflected by u_{xj}.

Analyses for response ratings were identical, except that tell_target was replaced by the averaged response ratings (centered at the participant's mean). An identical pair of analyses was conducted for the telling and response ratings of negative events.

Analyses for daily propartner orientations were somewhat different because we wanted to control for prior day's propartner orientation as well as for the affective value and perceived importance of that day's events. Accordingly, the following Level 1 equation was used:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Today's\_closeness}_{ij} = {} & b_{0j} + b_{1j}(\text{yesterday's\_closeness}_{ij}) \\ & + b_{2j}(\text{tell\_target}_{ij}) + b_{3j}(\text{how\_good}_{ij}) \\ & + b_{4j}(\text{good\_event\_importance}_{ij}) \\ & + b_{5j}(\text{how\_bad}_{ij}) \\ & + b_{6j}(\text{bad\_event\_importance}_{ij}) \\ & + b_{7j}(\text{week}_{ij}) + r_{ij}, \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

where b_{0j} refers to the intercept (i.e., person j's average closeness rating), and b_{1j}, b_{2j}, b_{3j}, b_{4j}, b_{5j}, b_{6j}, and b_{7j}, respectively, refer to slopes between daily closeness ratings and the prior day's closeness, whether they had told the target about that event, how good the day's best event had been, how important the day's best event had been, how bad how important the day's worst event had been, how important the day's worst event had been, and in which week of the 2-week diary period the event occurred. Error is represented by r_{ij}. Ratings were centered on each participant's mean. Tell_anyone and week were dummy variables (0, 1) and not centered.

The Level 2 (between-persons) equations were as follows.

$$b_{0j} = g_{00} + u_{0j}. \quad (7)$$

$$b_{1j} = g_{10} + u_{1j}. \quad (8)$$

$$b_{2j} = g_{20} + u_{2j}. \quad (9)$$

$$b_{3j} = g_{30} + u_{3j}. \quad (10)$$

$$b_{4j} = g_{40} + u_{4j}. \quad (11)$$

$$b_{5j} = g_{50} + u_{5j}. \quad (12)$$

$$b_{6j} = g_{60} + u_{6j}. \quad (13)$$

$$b_{7j} = g_{70} + u_{7j}. \quad (14)$$

In the first Level 2 equation, g_{00} represents the average intercept for closeness ratings. In the remaining equations, g_{x0} represents the average day-level intercepts and slopes for prior day closeness ratings, daily telling, four value and importance ratings, and week, respectively. Random error is reflected by u_{xj}.

Analyses for response ratings were identical, except that tell_target was replaced by the averaged response ratings (centered at the participant's mean). An identical pair of analyses was conducted for the telling and response ratings of negative events. The same analyses were conducted for propartner orientations. Days in which targets had been directly involved in the best (or worst) event were treated as missing data.

Postcasting results. As predicted and as consistent with Experiments 1 and 2, postcast ratings of positive events were significantly more likely to increase if those events had been told to another person ($B = 0.15$, $SE = 0.06$), $t(212) = 2.47$, $p < .02$. This results controls for the positivity of that event, as rated on the day of occurrence ($B = 0.41$, $SE = 0.02$), $t(212) = 19.22$, $p < .001$. Also as predicted, postcast ratings of positive events increased if partners' responses had been perceived as enthusiastic ($B = 0.06$, $SE = 0.01$), $t(211) = 3.77$, $p < .001$, again controlling for the positivity of that event rated on the day of occurrence ($B = 0.37$, $SE = 0.03$), $t(211) = 12.74$, $p < .001$. Thus, sharing news about daily positive events with an enthusiastic listener was associated with increased positivity about those events between 2 days and 17 days later.

As for negative events, relating those events to others did not produce significant change in how those events were later rated ($B = 0.09$, $SE = 0.06$), $t(212) = 1.42$, $p > .15$. However, the perceived supportiveness of the listener was significantly associated with later ratings ($B = 0.11$, $SE = 0.04$), $t(207) = 3.09$, $p < .005$. Both of these results control for the negativity of the event, rated on its day of occurrence, as rated on the day of occurrence

($B = 0.45$, $SE = 0.02$), $t(212) = 21.17$, $p < .001$, and ($B = 0.41$, $SE = 0.03$), $t(207) = 12.06$, $p < .001$. The positive sign of this coefficient indicates that when partners' responses were perceived as helpful and comforting, later ratings of those events were more negative, suggesting that partners' responses validated participants' views of how bad those events had been, thereby magnifying them. Another explanation is that partner responses, although perceived to be helpful and comforting, may have been a kind of visible support, which in prior research has been associated with increased distress (Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000).

Propartner orientation results. Results of these analyses for the key variables are displayed in Table 3. As expected, controlling for the prior day's propartner orientation, telling targets about one's daily positive events was significantly associated with increased propartner orientations ($B = 0.47$, $p < .001$) and felt closeness ($B = 0.81$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the more enthusiastic the partners' response, the greater the increase in propartner orientation ($B = 0.05$, $p < .001$) and felt closeness ($B = 0.08$, $p < .001$).

Findings for negative events were comparable. Telling targets about the day's worst event was significantly associated with increased propartner orientations ($B = 0.39$, $p < .001$) and felt closeness ($B = 0.68$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the more supportive the partners' response, the higher the level of propartner orientation ($B = 0.14$, $p < .001$) and felt closeness ($B = 0.34$, $p < .001$).[10,11]

Brief Discussion of Study 5

These daily diary results support the findings of the prior laboratory experiments. Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, when participants told others about their best events of the day and when those others responded in an enthusiastic manner, ratings of those events up to 17 days later increased. Relating negative events had no comparable benefit, although comforting responses did appear to validate the participants' view of those events. Consistent with Studies 3 and 4, daily reports of willingness to sacrifice and to accommodate a partner and of felt closeness increased when participants told their partners about those events and when their responses were perceived to be enthusiastic. Relating negative events was associated with similar benefits. Thus, this diary study provides convergent evidence from natural experiences within ongoing relationships for the findings reported earlier from laboratory experiments conducted with previously unacquainted individuals.

General Discussion

Several prior studies have shown that retelling positive news to another person is associated with higher levels of affective well-being. As described earlier, Langston (1994) proposed three marking functions to account for this correlation: increasing memorability, maximizing the event's personal significance, and building social resources. The four experiments and one diary study reported in this article were designed to provide experimental evidence for the latter two mechanisms.

Regarding maximization, Experiment 1 showed that recounting one of the best things to have happened in the past 2 years to an enthusiastic listener led to increased ratings of the positivity of that event but not of another event that had been nominated but not recounted. In contrast, writing about the event in private did not produce a comparable increase, nor did two control conditions. The results of Experiment 2, which directly compared enthusiastic listening with a more passive, distant style of listening, further suggested that it is not merely the act of recounting a positive event that boosted ratings but rather a process of interaction in which personal disclosures are responded to and encouraged by a listener whose enthusiasm implies interest and appreciation. Experiments 3 and 4 also supported the idea that enthusiastic listening is more effective in the capitalization process than neutral listening, although these two studies did not assess postdiscussion ratings of the recounted event. Study 5 similarly showed that temporally delayed ratings of a positive event are also more positive when those events have been shared with others and when those others are perceived to have responded enthusiastically.

Two aspects of this interaction process are likely to be critical. The first, consistent with our model of perceived partner responsiveness (Reis, 2007; Reis et al., 2004), is that enthusiastic responses convey validation, or in other words, the partner's attentive valuing of the material being revealed, and in particular its significance for the self (Gable & Reis, 2006). Several theories and related research indicate that positive feedback from interaction partners may influence self-assessments in a generally favorable way (e.g., Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Shrauger, 1975; Suls et al., 2002), but few of these examine assessments of the event itself. Observing increases in event-specific ratings is theoretically important because it shows that enthusiastic feedback helps people savor the recounted experience, as distinct from increases in mood or more general self-worth. We did not assess self-worth in these studies, so we cannot discount the possibility that general self-worth also increased, but the fact that we compared changes in ratings of the event discussed with changes in ratings of the event not discussed (which should also reflect general self-worth) argues against this possibility.

A second aspect of this interaction process concerns the role of listener feedback in shaping the speaker's account. Audience effects on the communication process are well-known; speakers tune their messages to the social context, varying what is presented according to such factors as personal goals, perceived audience expectations, and impressions that one's comments appear to be creating (e.g., Marsh, 2007; Pasupathi, 2006; Semin, 2000; Zajonc, 1960). These retellings may influence speakers' own impressions and later memories (e.g., Higgins & Rholes, 1978; E. J. Marsh & Tversky, 2004; McCann, Higgins, & Fondacaro, 1991). If so, listeners' enthusiastic responses during the short conversations used in our studies may have encouraged speakers to emphasize positive features of their narratives, thereby increasing postconversation positivity ratings. No such embellishment would be

[10] We also examined sex main effects and interactions involving key study variables. These effects did not surpass what would be expected by chance and did not qualify the major results.

[11] Although it would be desirable to include negative and positive events in the same analysis, this was not possible due to the necessity of treating days in which the target was involved in the best or worst event as missing data. Looking only at days for which targets were not involved in both the best and worst daily event results in a much-reduced and unrepresentative data set.

Table 3
Interpersonal Responses to Capitalization and Support Attempts

Category	Propartner orientation			Felt closeness		
	B	*t*	*p*	*B*	*t*	*p*
			Today's most positive event			
Yesterday's DV	0.084	3.12	<.003	0.019	0.73	*ns*
Tell target	0.467	7.63	<.001	0.809	10.13	<.001
Yesterday's DV	0.055	1.70	<.09	−0.003	−0.10	*ns*
Perceived capitalization	0.046	3.42	<.001	0.076	4.70	<.001
			Today's most negative event			
Yesterday's DV	0.060	2.51	<.02	0.029	1.22	*ns*
Tell target	0.394	7.29	<.001	0.678	9.04	<.001
Yesterday's DV	0.064	1.99	<.05	0.000	0.01	*ns*
Perceived help and comfort	0.144	4.01	<.001	0.337	9.07	<.001

Note. All analyses reported above control for ratings of how good and how important the day's most positive events were, how bad and how important the day's worst negative events were, and week. Variables in a block were included in the same analysis. Degrees of freedom vary from 192 to 213. DV = refers to yesterday's value of the dependent variable, so for the analyses of propartner orientation, it is yesterday's propartner orientation; for closeness, it is yesterday's felt closeness.

expected with neutral feedback, inasmuch as speakers would have no reason to believe that their comments had been received favorably.

Experiments 3 and 4, as well as the diary study, addressed social resources built by the capitalization process. Experiment 3 hypothesized and showed that capitalization led to increased liking, trust, and willingness to self-disclose personal information, whereas fun interactions led only to increased liking. This result was confirmed in the daily diary study, in terms of perceived closeness and adopting a prosocial orientation toward the target person. Experiment 4 demonstrated that even in the superficial setting of a brief street interview, enthusiastic responses to descriptions of personal positive events fostered greater willingness to return an overpayment. Thus, it appears that by supporting speakers' capitalization attempts, listeners may acquire a useful social resource, in the form of increased trust and greater prosocial concern.

Several explanations for this finding are plausible. For one, perceived responsiveness has often been posited to be a reciprocal process, whereby the receipt of need-responsive feedback encourages reciprocation in kind (e.g., Reis & Shaver, 1988), perhaps because of reciprocity norms (Gouldner, 1960) or perhaps because responsive feedback signals the listener's desire for a communal relationship, which itself facilitates a communal response (M. S. Clark & Mills, 1993). Another explanation is that enthusiastic responses suggest lack of envy on the listener's part and motivation to attend supportively to the speaker. As a consequence, enthusiastic responses probably help speakers feel secure and accepted, minimizing the need for self-protection and allowing prosocial responses to emerge (Murray et al., 2006). It is significant that Experiment 3 distinguished trust from liking. Our model, supported by this key result, builds on the assumption that capitalization is another vehicle for self-regulation in relationship contexts and not just a means for managing impressions and pursuing increased liking.

All four experiments in this series were designed to evaluate or control effects attributable to positive affect. Experiments 1, 3, and 4 showed differential responses for capitalization, compared with conditions in which positive affect was induced through noninterpersonal means. Of course, one cannot assume that the mood increase caused by a humorous film (Experiment 1) or candy (Experiment 4) is comparable with the mood increase caused by capitalization interactions, but the fact that these interactions did have demonstrable effects on prosocial outcomes, whereas the film and candy did not, suggests that mood is not the best explanation for our findings. Furthermore, in all four experiments, the primary effects remained significant after controlling for affect ratings. Thus, it seems safe to conclude that these findings cannot be explained by saying that enthusiastic listeners increase one's happiness and positive mood. On the other hand, the process we describe is not unrelated to positive affect, broadly construed. As Gable et al. (2004) and this research demonstrated, capitalization is associated with increased positive mood. Perceiving a partner's enthusiastic response to recounted positive events creates and maintains enjoyable interactions and helps people savor those events. On the other hand, perceiving a partner's disinterest or disparagement is likely to diminish and perhaps even undo the positive affect associated with the event. Thus, we propose that the capitalization process includes elements of the broaden-and-build cycle of positive affect and well-being described by Fredrickson (1998). It should not, however, be reduced to simple positive affect.

Limitations

One limitation of this research stems from our decision to conduct all four experiments with stranger-dyads. In real life, the targets of capitalization attempts are likely to be relationship partners and other close acquaintances, individuals whose responses may be interpreted in the context of previous experiences and expectations. We chose to study stranger-dyads for several reasons, one of which was our goal of experimentally manipulating partner responses. It would be substantially more difficult to make

such manipulations credible with relationship partners, and even then, responses seem likely to be interpreted in the context of prior experiences and beliefs. Moreover, because relationship partners are intrinsically interdependent, virtually any positive event experienced by one partner has personal implications for the other—usually positive but occasionally negative, such as when the partner's self-esteem is threatened or when the good news creates conflicts of interest between partners (e.g., a work promotion with added responsibilities or time away from home; Tesser et al., 1988). This would create potential confounds between actual responses to the retelling and perceived implications for the partner, which we sought to avoid. Furthermore, prior research on capitalization has been correlational, and we wanted to test causal hypotheses. Thus, the use of stranger dyads was in our view necessary, and we see experimental tests of these hypotheses in ongoing relationships as an important next step. Of course, the daily diary study speaks to the generalizability of these experimental findings within ongoing relationships.

Another limitation is that we did not examine the nature of the recounted events. Perhaps different types of events have different effects. For example, enthusiastic responses to events that reflect personal causation (e.g., doing well on a performance) or important self-referent values (e.g., being recognized for community service) may produce stronger effects than impersonal (e.g., winning a lottery) or relatively extrinsic (e.g., successfully completing a mundane task) events. It would also be informative in future research to conduct narrative analyses of capitalization interactions, to determine how the ebb-and-flow of conversation fosters and in turn reflects both participants' experience of responsiveness.

Finally, we acknowledge that these paradigms and manipulations are far from perfect in ruling out other factors that may be operating simultaneously with our constructs. This is often the case in laboratory paradigms that trade-off experimental control for highly engaging manipulations. Nevertheless, we believe that the convergence of results across different settings and methods bolsters confidence in our findings and interpretations (Brewer, 2000).

Conclusion

It is a common and, we suspect, universal human impulse to seek out others when good things happen. Although the recounting of positive events may not have the same urgency as the retelling of negative events, we believe that such sharing is an important but understudied part of the process of building and maintaining close relationships. When the capitalization process goes right, it allows relationship partners not only to savor their own good fortune but to share in that of a partner. On the other hand, when the process goes wrong, it can transform a positive experience into an aversive one. As such, it will be important to further understand how, in a relationship context, good becomes better or worse.

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