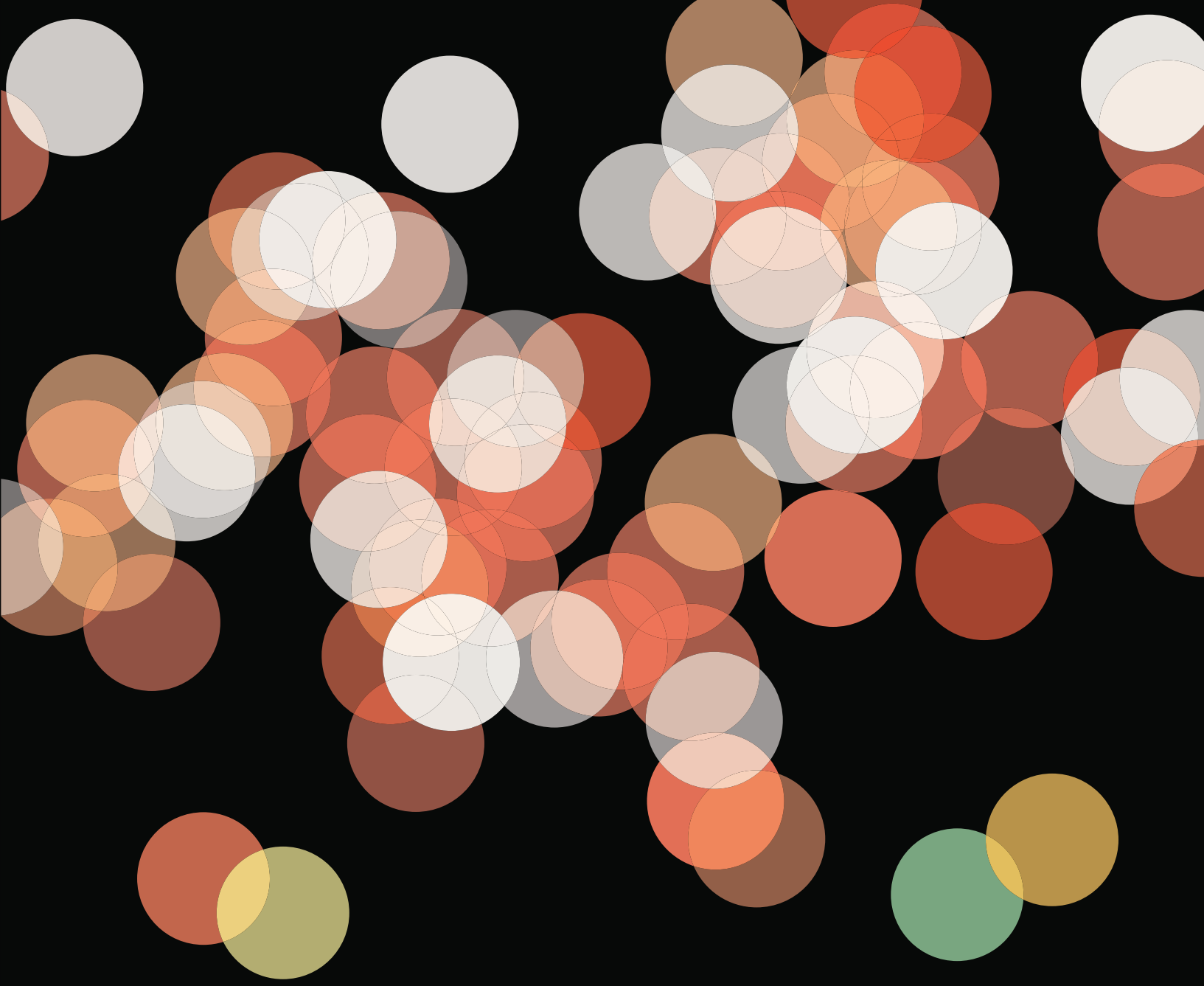

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Within non-clinical populations, studies of gender differences in externalizing emotions and behaviors have focused primarily on anger and aggression. Differences in physical aggression are the clearest and most universal. Everywhere in the world it seems males are more physically aggressive than females. A recent meta-analysis of studies conducted in 20 countries found that men showed consistently higher levels of physical aggression (Archer, 2005). Parallel to the early emergence of mood disorders in girls, boys' tendencies toward aggressive behavior also emerge early, becoming evident as early as preschool. However, this seemingly obvious general conclusion needs to be tempered by studies showing that circumstances and social norms may affect when and how each gender expresses anger and aggression (e.g., Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Frodi, Macaulay, & Thomas, 1977; Geen, 1998; Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999). For example, Bettencourt and Miller (1996) found men to be more aggressive in unprovoked or neutral conditions, but men and women were equally aggressive when provoked. That is, when individuals feel frustrated, insulted, or threatened, gender differences are diminished. In more neutral everyday situations, men are quicker to aggress because they are more likely to "see" provocation in ambiguous situations.

Another complication involves the type of aggression measured by researchers. Men may engage in more physical aggression, but studies reviewed by Geen (1998) and more recently by Archer and Coyne (2005) show that women use more verbal and relational aggression. Relational aggression means harming another individual's relationships and status with their peers. This might involve spreading damaging negative information about the person. Finally, most research reviews (e.g., Geen, 1998; Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999) note that social norms and expectations may play an important role in the mixed findings concerning gender, anger, and aggression. Women have been found to be more conflicted than men about the expression of physical aggression, and women are less aggressive when they may cause harm to another person, feel guilty about what they've done, or fear retaliation. Men and women appear to have different beliefs and are influenced by different social norms that determine the specific circumstances that evoke anger and influence the expression of aggression (Eagly & Steffen, 1986).

POSITIVE MOODS AND BEHAVIORS Self-report studies of positive moods such as happiness, joy, and love also reveal somewhat inconsistent gender patterns. A number of researchers have found that women report experiencing more happiness and more intense positive emotions than men (e.g., Diener et al., 1985; Fujita et al., 1991), while several others have found no differences or somewhat more happiness among men than women (e.g., Diener, 1984; Haring et al., 1984). One consistent finding is that women express more positive emotions than men (Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999). More women than men report expressing joy, happiness, and love to others. Observational studies of women's nonverbal behaviors affirm the greater expressiveness of women. For example, hundreds of studies show that women smile more frequently than men (LeFrance, Hecht, & Paluck, 2003). Studies of smiling in magazine and newspaper photos, together with observations of smiling among people in shopping malls and parks, and on city streets all show that women smile more than men (Halberstadt & Saitta, 1987). Women also appear more skillful than men at "reading" nonverbal cues and correctly assessing the emotional states of others (Hall, 1984).

Explaining the Paradox of Gender

Despite complications and controversies about the exact nature of gender differences, it seems clear that on average men and women have rather different emotional lives. Yet, as previously noted, research also shows that the overall level of happiness among men and women is essentially the same. The apparent contradiction of these two sets of findings is the basis for the paradox of gender. The paradox of gender has no clear resolution. However, several possible answers have been offered.

One possible answer comes from studies suggesting that women have more intense emotional experiences than men. For example, some researchers have found that women report higher levels of both pleasant and unpleasant emotions than men (Fujita et al., 1991); that women are more likely than men to report being very happy (Lee, Seccombe, & Shehan, 1991); and that women's greater emotional intensity occurs across many different ages (Diener et al., 1985). These findings suggest to some authors that women are "more emotional" than men, in that women have

more intense and extreme emotional lives (e.g., Brody & Hall, 1993; Fujita et al., 1991). Differences in emotional intensity may contribute to the paradox of gender. Diener and his colleagues (1999) have suggested that women's more intense positive emotions may be balanced by their more intense negative emotions. This averaging-out of extremes could result in an overall level of happiness similar to men's. That is, within a large sample of women reporting on their level of happiness, the highs of some may be offset by the lows of others.

Another explanation for the gender paradox suggests that some of the "emotionality" of women may be more apparent than real. Gender stereotypes, and the expectations that follow from them, may influence women's responses on measures of SWB. Several authors have argued that, despite the many gender role changes in our society, stereotypes still strongly affect how people think about the differences between men and women (Brody & Hall, 1993; Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999; Woods, Rhodes, & Whelan, 1989). When people are asked to describe a "typical man" or "typical woman," they tend to do so in a way that affirms traditional gender stereotypes. Women are believed to experience more intense emotions than men and to express more love, sadness, and fear (Fabes & Martin, 1991; Grossman & Wood, 1993). Men are seen as less emotional and less expressive, with the notable exceptions of anger and aggression.

What do these stereotypes have to do with the paradox? Brody and Hall (1993) suggest that gender stereotypes may become a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy or normative expectation that influences women's expression of emotion. Gender stereotypes may affect women's outward expression of emotion more than their actual inner emotional experience (Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999). This possibility is in line with studies comparing men's and women's actual levels of emotion, as measured in real time by experience sampling methods (ESM), to levels based on retrospective recall (Robinson & Johnson, 1997; Robinson, Johnson, & Shields, 1998). Men and women showed similar levels of emotion on the ESM, but women reported higher levels of emotion than men on the recall measures, and this difference increased with longer recall time delays. The differences found for the retrospective measure may have resulted from men and women recalling their emotions in ways that were consistent with gender stereotypes. Other researchers have also reported that moment-to-moment measures do not reveal the gender differences found on more global measures (e.g., Feldman Barrett, Robin, Pietromonaco, & Eyssel, 1998).

Finally, the eudaimonic perspective (which defines well-being in terms of healthy functioning rather than happiness) suggests that the paradox of gender may result, in part, from how well-being is defined. Most of the research on gender and happiness has followed the hedonic model, in which the balance of positive and negative emotions is a major defining component of SWB. As a result, the higher rates of depression and more frequent experiencing of negative emotions among women seem to contradict the finding of overall gender similarity in SWB. That is, women's greater vulnerability to negative emotions and mood disorders "should" result in somewhat lower levels of SWB for women than for men.

The eudaimonic view defines well-being in terms of the attributes associated with psychological health—not happiness. According to this view, well-being involves a more complex array of factors than the SWB conception. Ryff, Singer, and their colleagues define well-being and healthy functioning in terms of six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (see Ryff & Singer, 2002). Profiles of healthy functioning based on these dimensions parallel the findings of SWB research. Results from many studies have shown men and women to have very similar levels of overall well-being, but some specific dimensions of well-being show clear gender differences. For example, in several studies, women scored higher than men on positive relations with others and personal growth.

Because of their differing conceptions of well-being, hedonic and eudaimonic researchers part company somewhat when it comes to the meaning of these findings. Gender similarity in overall happiness (despite gender differences in emotional experience) raises a paradox within the hedonic view of well-being. Well-being defined eudaimonically as healthy functioning does not raise a similar paradox. Ryff and Singer note that their findings on the well-being and strengths of women do not contradict gender differences in negative moods and depression. Instead, they " . . . enrich the picture by

pointing out that psychological vulnerabilities may exist, side by side with notable psychological strengths" (Ryff & Singer, 2002, p. 545). In other words, the co-occurrence of strengths and vulnerabilities is not particularly paradoxical when well-being is defined in terms of healthy psychological functioning. All of us have our strengths and weaknesses, and unless the weaknesses are extreme, they do not necessarily compromise our overall health and well-being. One reason is that strengths can compensate for weaknesses. For example, women's greater emotional vulnerability may be offset by their strengths in developing positive relations with others. We know that positive relationships exert a powerful influence on our health and personal happiness—an effect clearly shown by the influences of marriage on well-being, to be considered next.

There is one last bit of complexity in the relationship between strengths and vulnerabilities. In addition to the co-existence of strengths and vulnerabilities and the possibility of offsetting effects, strengths may have a downside, and weaknesses an upside. It may be, for example, that women's strengths in developing and maintaining positive relationships also contribute to their more frequent experience of negative affect and intense emotions. Empathy and sensitivity to others are important in relationships. Women have been shown to have more of these abilities than men, which may cause women to be more influenced by the negative emotions of others (Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999; Woods et al., 1989). Women's higher susceptibility to the emotions of others may be responsible for some of the differences in emotional experience between men and women. On the other hand, men (who show lower scores on the "positive relations with others" dimension) (Ryff & Singer, 2000, 2002) may have diminished social well-being compared to women, but may also have more stable emotions. If men's lower level of empathy and social sensitivity makes them less susceptible to the emotions of others, the result may be a less extreme emotional life for men than for women (with the exception of anger).

So, who is happier, men or women? Answer: Neither. Each gender appears, on average, to share a unique combination of strengths and vulnerabilities. In overall comparisons, these gender-related strengths and vulnerabilities may offset each other, producing no overall differences in average level of happiness. These same differences in strengths and vulnerabilities also help explain why the emotional lives of men and women are, on average, quite different.

MARRIAGE AND HAPPINESS

Most demographic variables show only small relationships to happiness. One major exception to this general pattern involves the effects of marriage on SWB. About 90% of us eventually marry and the vast majority of us will be happier as a result (Myers, 2000a). An extensive literature documents the relationship between marriage and higher levels of SWB (see Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Diener & Seligman; 2004, Myers, 1999 & 2000a; Myers & Diener, 1995; Woods et al., 1989, for reviews). Higher than what? Higher than people who never married or who are divorced, separated, or widowed. The marriage–happiness relationship has consistently been demonstrated in large-scale surveys of Americans and Europeans (see Diener et al., 1999). A meta-analytic review of nearly 100 studies found marriage to be a strong predictor of life satisfaction, happiness, and overall well-being (Woods et al., 1989). The positive effects of marriage are large. One national survey of 35,000 people in the United States (reviewed by Myers, 2000a) found that the percentage of married adults who said they were "very happy" (40%) was nearly double that of those who never married (26%). Even when researchers control for the possible confounding effects of other variables such as income and age, there is still a significant relationship between marriage and well-being (e.g., Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983; Haring-Hidore, Stock, Okun, & Witter, 1985). Compared to other domains of life (such as job status and health), being married and having a family repeatedly show the strongest connection to life satisfaction and happiness (Campbell et al., 1976; Inglehart, 1990).

Benefits of Marriage

What is responsible for the marriage–happiness relationship? Is it the beneficial effects of marriage? Or are people who get married simply happier to begin with? Arguments for the benefits of marriage may begin with Baumeister and Leary's (1995) argument. They argue that human beings have a basic "need to belong." Countless studies reviewed by these and other authors (e.g., Berscheid, 2003; Deci & Ryan, 1991) show the importance of close,

supportive, and stable relationships to people's physical and emotional well-being. People consistently rank close relationships among their top life goals (Emmons, 1999b). Given that marriage is one major vehicle for fulfillment of this basic need, it would follow that married people would report higher levels of well-being and happiness. Marriage has the potential to provide companionship, intimacy, love, affection, and social support in times of crisis. The roles of spouse and parent may also provide opportunities for personal growth and the development of new competencies that increase self-esteem and satisfaction.

A "general benefits" view is supported by the fact that the marriage–happiness relationship is found across widely diverse cultures, independent of whether researchers ask about marriage quality. The significant drop in well-being when marriages end due to death, divorce, or separation provides further evidence for the benefits of marriage. The end of marriage may mean the loss of intimacy, companionship, and emotional support, and decreased financial resources. The benefits of marriage are further revealed in terms of the higher levels of emotional distress and mental illness found among people who are unmarried and living alone with few friends or confidants (see Diener & Seligman, 2004; Myers, 2000a; Waite & Gallagher, 2000, for reviews). In contrast, married people have a lower risk for experiencing depression, loneliness, or physical and mental health problems, and live longer than individuals who are widowed, separated, or divorced. Overall, married people generally enjoy better physical and mental health than unmarried people. Marriage may also help people overcome problems in their lives. A 7-year study of over 800 men and women found decreases in rates of depression and alcoholism among those who got married compared to those who remained single (Horwitz, White, & Howell-White, 1996a). Myers (2000a) argues that most of the available research supports the beneficial effects of marriage as the major reason for the greater well-being of married people. A high percentage of married people appear to be content with their marriages. A majority of married couples say that their spouse is their best friend and that they would marry the same person again (Glenn, 1996; Greeley, 1991).

Clearly, the quality of a marriage is critical to its well-being benefits. As Myers (1992) put it, "In terms of individual happiness, a bad marriage is worse than no marriage at all" (p. 158). An extensive literature documents the negative effects of bad relationships on well-being (Argyle, 2001; Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Diener & Seligman, 2004; Reis & Gable, 2003). The list of destructive marital elements is long, including physical/emotional abuse, alcoholism, conflict, hostility, jealousy, infidelity, and dominance. The adverse effects of a bad marriage on well-being are also numerous (Argyle, 2001; Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Gottman, 1994; Reis & Gable, 2003), highlighted by the fact that problem relationships are among the most common reasons that people seek professional help from counselors and psychotherapists. There are many questions concerning the distinguishing features of good and bad relationships and how people develop and maintain successful long-term marriages."

Selection Effects

The effects of marriage quality and the benefits of marriage offer straightforward explanations for the higher levels of reported happiness among married people. Well-being researchers have examined two other factors that may attenuate the marriage–happiness relationship: selection and adaptation. The term **selection effect** refers to the possibility that people who marry are simply happier, before they get married, than those who don't marry. If this is true, then the effects of marriage on well-being are inflated by who gets married in the first place. These so-called selection effects are based on the assumption that happy people are more desirable marriage partners than unhappy people and are therefore more likely to marry, and to do so sooner (Veenhoven, 1988). This certainly makes some sense, given that most of us prefer the company of people who are upbeat and cheerful rather than moody and irritable. However, studies of selection effects reveal mixed results. A large-scale study in Norway found selection effects in the marriage–happiness relationship among 9,000 people (Mastekaasa, 1992). However, a 12-year longitudinal study found that selection effects made only a small contribution to the higher well-being of married individuals (Johnson & Wu, 2002). Myers (2000a) raises another problem with explanations based on selection effects: If happy people are more likely to marry, and to do so earlier in their lives, then as people age, the happiness of married people as a group

would go down, as older and less happy people begin to marry. In other words, the addition of less happy people to the married group would pull down the overall average. A similar change would occur among the never-married group. As less-happy people eventually get married, the most-unhappy people are increasingly left in the never-married group, reducing the average level of happiness. As Myers notes, data on well-being and marital status do not support these predictions based on selection effects. On the contrary, differences in happiness among married and never-married individuals are consistent across age groups.

Focus on Research: Are We Still Happy After the Honeymoon?

Adaptation refers to a return to set point and a longer-term level of happiness, as people adjust to an event's emotional impact. The process of adaptation raises the question of whether the increase in happiness after marriage is a long-term increase, or whether people eventually return to their pre-marriage levels of happiness. A longitudinal study of over 24,000 people living in Germany *not only* found evidence for an overall pattern of adaptation to the emotional impact of marriage, but also found considerable individual variability in how marriage affected pre-marriage levels of happiness (Lucas et al., 2003). Participants were interviewed annually over a 15-year period. Among the measures taken in the study was a rating of overall life satisfaction, on which responses could range from 0 (totally unhappy) to 10 (totally happy). Two marital transitions were studied: getting married and becoming widowed. The effects of these events were evaluated by comparing pre-marriage and pre-widowhood happiness to the levels of happiness shortly after the event and in subsequent years of the study. To better isolate the effects of these marital transitions, only those persons who stayed married for the duration of the study were used to examine the effects of marriage (1,012 participants), and only those who remained widowed (did not remarry) were used to evaluate the effects of losing one's spouse (500 participants).

In Lucas and colleagues' study, marriage produced a small short-term boost in happiness (about one-tenth of a point on an 11-point scale) and this increase faded during subsequent years of marriage. Averages across all of the participants showed people to be no happier after marriage than they were before. These findings provide strong evidence for the process of adaptation to the emotional consequences of getting married. Results also suggest that selection effects play a role in the marriage–happiness relationship. Participants who got married during the study had higher average levels of happiness (compared to other participants) *before* marriage. How much this selection effect contributed to the increase in satisfaction after marriage is unclear. The magnitude of the selection effect was not assessed. The results for widowed individuals showed much longer-term effects and much slower adaptation. Eight years after losing their spouse, participants' average happiness ratings approached pre-widowhood levels, but did not recover completely. Many widowed individuals showed stable and long-term declines in life satisfaction and therefore did not show complete adaptation to the loss of their spouses.

Lucas and his colleagues (2003) note that the overall pattern of adaptation to marriage must be tempered by the fact of wide variability in individual responses. Based on their data, Lucas and his colleagues plotted the marital trajectory for three hypothetical individuals shown in Figure 4. The figure shows that the return to pre-marriage levels

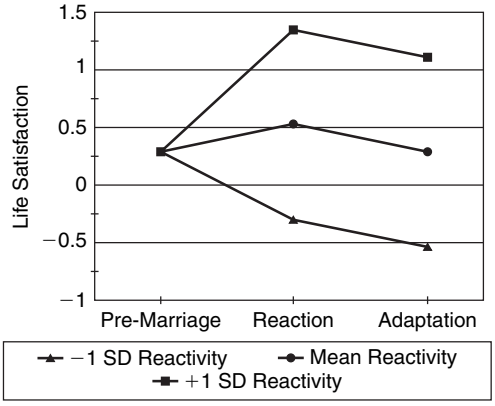

FIGURE 4 Three Reactions to Marriage

−1 SD represents someone who reacts negatively to marriage (one standard deviation below the average response), +1 SD represents a positive reaction to marriage (one standard deviation above the average response), and mean reactivity is the average response. *Source:* Lucas, R. E., Clark, A. E., Georgellis, Y., & Diener, E. (2003). Reexamining adaptation and the set point model of happiness: Reactions to changes in marital status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 527–539. Copyright American Psychological Association. Reprinted by permission.

of happiness for participants as a group (Mean Reactivity) masked some quite significant individual variations. The longitudinal design of the study allowed researchers to track changes in happiness for individual participants. These data revealed that many people were much happier after marriage (+1 SD), and this increase in happiness continued across the time span of the study. Interestingly, about an equal number of people reported far *less* happiness after marriage, and this reduction in happiness was maintained across time (−1 SD). These two groups show that many people do not adapt to the effects of marriage, but show long-term increases or decreases in their baseline levels of happiness. Results for these groups also help explain the overall finding of adaptation to marriage. Those whose happiness increased were cancelled out by those whose happiness decreased, resulting in no apparent pre- and post-marriage differences in happiness.

Whether happiness increased or declined was significantly related to people's initial reaction to getting married. Those who reacted positively to marriage increased their long-term levels of happiness. Those who had negative, or less positive initial reactions either showed no long-term changes or became even less happy than they were prior to marriage. Lucas and his colleagues believe a process they call **hedonic leveling** explains some of these differences. Consider this finding from their study: The most satisfied people had the least positive reactions to getting married, but they had the strongest negative reactions to divorce and widowhood. Why would this be? Hedonic leveling involves the effect of a person's existing level of life satisfaction and happiness on the emotional impact of a life event. Happy individuals (who may have many supportive friends) may have less to gain from marriage because their needs for companionship and intimacy are already relatively fulfilled in other relationships. An unhappy or lonely person (who may have fewer friends) may have much to gain from marriage in terms of securing intimacy and companionship. These gains would likely result in higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction. To put it bluntly, if you are quite happy, how much happier can you get? And if you're miserable, it may not take much to cheer you up.

Hedonic leveling may be responsible for the varied individual reactions to marriage that were averaged out in the overall finding. That is, if marriage has little effect on happy people, but a big effect on unhappy people, the differences between the two groups are reduced or leveled out. The same process may affect the impact of widowhood on particular individuals. People who are happy with life because they have satisfying marriages have much to lose if their spouse dies, while loss of a partner in a very unhappy marriage may have much less effect.

Does the overall adaptation to marriage shown in Lucas and colleagues' study contradict research that has consistently shown the benefits of marriage? No single study is ever definitive. Because the participants were all German citizens, additional research will need to address questions concerning the cross-cultural validity of results. However, the power of this study lies in its longitudinal design, which allowed a teasing-out, rather than an averaging-out, of individual reactions to marital transitions. At the very least, the research by Lucas and colleagues indicates the strength of longitudinal methods and the weakness of cross-sectional studies in determining the individualized effects of life events on SWB.

Gender Differences in the Benefits of Marriage

Two final issues in the marriage–happiness relationship involve the question of whether men or women benefit the most from marriage, and whether the benefits of marriage have declined over time. Findings for both issues are mixed. Some studies suggest that men experience more emotional benefits in terms of increases in positive emotions and protection against depression (Diener et al., 1999; Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999). However, other research finds no gender differences in life satisfaction, but does suggest that the effects of divorce or separation fall along gender lines, with women experiencing more depression, and men more alcohol abuse (Horwitz, White, & Howell-White, 1996b). Myers (2000a) argues that these mixed results do not alter the basic fact shown in many studies that the gap in happiness between married and unmarried people is about the same for men and for women.

Whether there has been a decline in the strength of the marriage–happiness relationship is also unclear. Several studies in America have shown an apparent decline since the 1970s (e.g., Glenn