Friendship and Happiness from a Sociological Perspective

Silvana Greco, Mary Holmes and Jordan McKenzie

Introduction

This chapter explores friendship and happiness from a sociological perspective. Much of the study of the links between happiness and friendship in the lives of individuals has been conducted within psychology (Demir et al. 2013), whereas we shall show how sociology has ignored friendship (if we exclude Georg Simmel) until recently and has tended to examine happiness as it relates to changing perceptions of 'the good life', to interaction with others and to patterns of power. Sociological discourse focuses on how broader social and cultural transformations influence friendship and how an analysis of friendship helps us understand those transformations. It also analyses friendship during the whole life course in order to reveal how collective interaction is changing and how it affects the private sphere. It is argued that friendship plays a crucial role in people's lives, especially during critical events such as an illness, the death of near relative or the loss of a job. In modern societies friendship differs from in the past, being a particular interpersonal relationship based on reciprocity, trust and affect, which is freely chosen by individuals according to their elective affinities. Friends represent a precious social and emotional capital, providing a network, but also offering different kinds of resources such as emotional support, information, trust, financial support, and influence. In presenting these arguments, the first section outlines how happiness is understood

S. Greco (✉)
Institut für Judaistik, Freie Universität Berlin, Schwendenerstr. 27, 14195 Berlin, Germany
e-mail: silvana.greco@fu-berlin.de

M. Holmes
School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, 6.30 Chrystal Macmillan Building15a, George, Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LD, UK
e-mail: mary.holmes@ed.ac.uk

J. McKenzie
Discipline of Sociology, University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2350, Australia
e-mail: jmcken28@une.edu.au

within sociological discourse, elaborating the different ways in which happiness has been defined throughout history and critical debates about whether a social focus on happiness contributes to individual subjective well-being or can function to regulate and constrain people within social structures. The second section continues by examining social conditions for happiness and offering a critical overview of happiness studies. The chapter then explores friendship in sociological discourse, examining debates around whether friendship fosters social cohesion or promotes social inequalities. Finally, we examine friendship and happiness in different social spheres, using examples from original research on friendships at work and on how friendships are navigated through online social media like Facebook.

Happiness in the Sociological Discourse

For philosophers and social scientists, the utility of happiness for individuals and the broader society has always been associated with social analysis. Throughout history individuals have strived for a happier life, for better living conditions and for increased well-being. As a result, happiness is a concept that has received different interpretations and definitions, according to different philosophical traditions and the more recent varying theoretical perspectives of economists, psychologists and sociologists. Yet, the application of sociological perspectives is often lacking in research on happiness (Kroll 2011), and there is reason to view this as a serious problem within the field.

There is a need to highlight the significance of social context when defining happiness, as the role of social interaction is often overlooked. For example, Aristotle (1983) describes the good life in terms of *eudaimonia* which involves a kind of well-being that results from a prosperous and virtuous lifestyle. Although Aristotle recognises the importance of cultural factors in the experience of social life, he considers the virtues and priorities associated with *eudaimonia* to be fixed, rather than socially constructed and flexible. From this definition, Aristotle differentiates himself from the Aristippean (435–366 B.C.) tradition, in which happiness—and more generally well-being—is related to the aim of maximizing everyday pleasure, in particular physical pleasure. Between the hedonism of Aristippus and the structured position of Aristotle, Epicurus can be seen as proposing an approach to the good life where pleasure is prioritised whilst gluttony is looked down upon. According to Ryan and Deci (2006), much of the research on happiness today involves either an individualised approach based on hedonism or a collective approach drawn from *eudaimonia*. Yet a sociological understanding of happiness and the good life needs to acknowledge both the importance of social and personal factors, whilst accounting for shifting cultural norms that change with time.

As underlined by Plé (2000), Aristotlian ways of thinking about subjective well-being are already visible in the work of Comte, the founding father of sociology. Comte's "notion of '*bonheur*' (happiness) denotes a state of intellectual enlightenment combined with sacral feelings of inclusion and consensus that result from

social progress" (as cited in Veenhoven 2008, p. 46). From this he develops a sociological approach to happiness that differs from psychological conceptualizations of it as an interior mental or emotional state of well-being characterized by positive emotions ranging from feeling pleasant to experiencing great joy. Meanwhile Daniel Haybron (2007) provides a definition of happiness, well-being and life satisfaction in regard to the use of empirical studies of happiness. According to Haybron, in much of the survey-based research on happiness, the terms happiness and well-being are used interchangeably (Haybron 2007). It is reasonable to presume that the experience of one implies the presence of the other, yet it is the notion of life satisfaction that yields unique results in empirical research. Life satisfaction alludes to a more contextualised and less pleasure based understanding of happiness that is closer to a notion of the good life. As a result, this chapter will consider happiness and well-being to be aligned (for the most part) and therefore in contrast to notions of life satisfaction or contentment.

From a sociological perspective, happiness is an important part of a broader subjective well-being (Bartram 2011) which must be understood within its social context (Illouz 1997). In sociology and related disciplines like cultural studies and feminist and queer theory, happiness is subject to critiques which question how it might contribute to oppression and be a key mechanism in forms of social control (Ahmed 2010). Others focus on defining happiness as the positive evaluation which a single individual gives his or her life, or some aspects of his or her life (Diener et al. 1997; Nuvolati 2002; Veenhoven 1984, 2008). According to Ruut Veenhoven, the evaluation of one's life is based upon two types of appraisals which represent the two components of happiness. The first is the affective, which refers to "the degree to which affective experience is dominated by pleasantness during a certain period" (Veenhoven 1984, p. 38). The second is cognitive (contentment), which has to be understood as "the degree to which an individual perceives his or her conscious aims to be achieved" (Veenhoven 2008). In other words, individuals go through a process of feeling and thinking via which they judge their achievements according to their aspirations. For others, such as Giampaolo Nuvolati (2002), the affective component is happiness in the strict sense, while the second component—the cognitive one—is defined as satisfaction. In this chapter the concept of happiness will be understood according to the conceptualization of Ruut Veenhoven. However, we would argue that the affective and the cognitive components of happiness are not always distinct as emotions are not the antithesis of reason, but play a crucial part in our reasoning and reflexivity (Holmes 2010).

Hence, for sociologists happiness is related to the more general well-being of an individual and of the whole society and is determined by specific living conditions. Generally sociologists distinguish between an objective and a subjective well-being, which together constitute the so called 'quality of life' because the individual is not a single rational atom but embedded in social relations and interacts constantly with other human beings. Therefore, the Italian sociologist Giampaolo Nuvolati (2002), defines objective well-being as specific needs whose satisfaction is based on the ownership and management of material and immaterial resources (objective living conditions). These needs also arise from human relations, or from the way in

which the individual relates to other human beings and to the whole society. He understands subjective well-being in terms of individuals' perception and evaluation of their satisfaction with their living conditions (satisfaction) and of their part in human and social relations (happiness). There have been some attempts to investigate these perceptions and evaluations.

"Happiness studies" have involved research that has tried to examine the extent and degree of happiness within contemporary societies, but from a sociological viewpoint these studies need to be considered within the context of broader examinations of the 'quality of life' and how it has changed relative to developing social conditions. During the 1970s, sociological attention to quality of life flourished, but prior to this, a number of sociologists had already stressed the importance of examining the quality of life in post-industrial societies (see Elias 1939/2000, 2001; Marcuse 1964, 1969). Yet for Daniel Bell, in industrial societies quality of life was seen as determined according to the quantity of goods required to reach a reasonable standard of living. Whereas in post-industrial society he defined this quality of life in terms of the services and amenities—health, education, recreation, and the arts—which are now deemed desirable and possible for everyone (Bell 1973). Meanwhile Richard Sennett (1970) had concerns about the new sources of fulfilment in post-industrial societies where the interest in *wants* had surpassed the interest in *needs*.

Thus, for sociologists, an important aspect of happiness is that it is socially constructed, since it depends on shared and collective notions about life which frame individual appraisals (Veenhoven 2008). Indeed, the notion of happiness is not stable, it changes over time and has different meanings in different countries. According to some sociologists, societies such as America have a higher propensity towards optimism—thus highlighting the positive aspects of life. Others, such as French society, tend to be more pessimistic and underline the negative aspects (Ostroot and Snyder 1985). Finally, according to Ruut Veenhoven (2008), an additional cognitive process involved in achieving subjective well-being is that of "reflected appraisal". Individuals make a positive appraisal of their life if other individuals make the same kind of appraisal and vice versa (p. 47).

Sociologists have also underlined that subjective well-being and, in particular, happiness is a multidimensional and multi-factorial *social* phenomenon. Happiness has an impact upon different aspects of the life of a social actor and it is influenced by different factors. In short, happiness must be understood as "socially situated" (Illouz 1997, p. 61), as made difficult or easy for different social groups experiencing different historical and social conditions.

Social Conditions for Happiness

There are a number of key debates regarding empirical studies of happiness and well-being that need to be briefly assessed at this point. Perhaps the most divisive debate in the field is in regard to the Easterlin paradox which suggests that as wealth increases, so do the expectations of individuals (Easterlin 2001). This causes either

a decline in happiness and subjective well-being as wealth increases—as suggested by Lane (2000)—or simply a lack of any major change to the individual's self-reported level of well-being. The Easterlin paradox is troubling for social researchers, but also policy makers, economists and politicians, as it strikes at the core of a key assumption made about the welfare of individuals in modernity; namely that improving living standards will result in happier individuals. However this paradox has been rejected by a number of key researchers, most notably, Ruut Veenhoven.

Veenhoven (2010) disputes claims that happiness is in decline by citing more recent happiness research from 2000 to 2008 and comparing health and life expectancy data between generations. Research has underlined that in the last 40 years, inequality in the levels of happiness experienced by different class groups has decreased in modern nations (Veenhoven 2010, 2005). Recent research using data and new measurements from the World Value Survey indicate that the more equal a society the more equally distributed happiness is amongst its citizens (Delhey and Kohler 2011, 2012).

Rather than solely focusing on wealth, the political conditions such as social and democratic participation in a country have a strong impact on subjective well-being. In particular, empirical research has demonstrated that political freedom correlates positively with happiness and that political violence and political protest correlates negatively with happiness (Frey and Stutzer 2002; Veenhoven 2008). *Social participation*—meaning people's engagement in their communities and their *active democratic involvement*—generally enhances people's subjective well-being and happiness. It does so because it increases people's social capital, which means their social networks and the resources that they can get from these networks such as trust, information and opportunities. Social participation (as indeed Durkheim 1902/1964, 1897/1952 sets out) also fosters happiness by giving individuals a sense of having control and being part of society (Veenhoven 2008). More specifically, recent literature has shown that "friends bring more social trust, less stress, better health, and more social support, which are positively related to [subjective well-being]" (Van der Horst and Coffe 2010, p. 526).

With the increased demand for research to produce correlations between social indicators (which may include friendship in the form of social capital) and happiness levels, it is important to consider the limitations of such studies. For example, a factor that often enhances happiness is the level of education since it increases the chances for gaining a higher income and, therefore, supports social mobility (Veenhoven 2008). Also, investigations have shown that religious persons are generally happier, healthier, more satisfied with their life and suffer fewer psycho-social consequences from traumatic events than non-religious persons (see for example, Ellison 1991; Koening et al. 2001; Maton 1987). However these correlations do not support causality, rather it is necessary to consider the complexity of social life and the influence of expectations. If individuals with low levels of education are found to be less happy than those who are highly educated, then we must consider whether education is a symptom or a cause of unhappiness. Therefore, in order to best utilise happiness studies from a sociological perspective, it is important to avoid oversimplifying the complex and highly influential nature of social experience.

At a *meso level* of analysis, the sociological literature on the causes and so-cial processes that enhance happiness includes considerable attention to the role of the private sphere of intimate ties and relationships, but with little attention to friendship. Family life may foster happiness through social and emotional support, especially during difficult times and in moments of transition (Veenhoven 1984). More specifically, marital happiness has been the subject of many studies. These shifted from the 1950s when marital happiness was found to correlate positively with the husband having higher occupational status and power, to the late 1970s (Glenn and Weaver 1978) when results showed that husband-wife similarities in socio-economic status were more likely to produce happiness. Other important vari-ables which enhance happiness in the family are sexual enjoyment, creation of time for one another, age at marriage, and emotional rewards. Children may decrease happiness in low income families as spouses often experience stress related to the management of their children (Peiro 2006). In dual income families the reconcili-ation between work and family life can be difficult especially in those countries lacking public support in terms of services and welfare (see for example, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003).

This brings us to research on the public sphere, including paid work and volun-tary activities, and how they might indicate that friendship is important to happi-ness. Many studies have underlined that job satisfaction increases individual happi-ness and self-esteem where jobs offer work values, career opportunities, autonomy, complexity and social participation (Pugliesi 1995). Being unemployed negatively affects people's happiness since it is perceived as personal failure and hence, reduc-es self-esteem (Peiro 2006), but also because it decreases control over one's life and reduces social interaction. On the other hand, voluntary work in clubs, and places of worship seems particularly rewarding in terms of happiness because it fosters social inclusion (Patulny 2004), including opportunities to make friends.

Finally, at a *micro* level of analysis—focusing on the single individual—the so-ciological literature has pointed out that attributes such as physical health and gen-eral mental effectiveness help people to be happier but so do specific attitudes that we could call friendliness. Being open, empathic and tactful, helps people to get better along with others and hence increases their subjective well-being (Veenhoven 1984). This finding has been supported more recently in the "World Happiness Re-port" where levels of trust and mental and physical health were shown to be more important to happiness than household income (Helliwell et al. 2012). The impor-tance of relating to others noted in the sociological discourse on happiness indicates that it is vital to think further about friendship.

Friendship in Sociological Discourse

Sociological literature on friendship has debated its importance for social cohe-sion versus its role in reproducing wider social inequalities. Although social struc-tural and psychological aspects may combine to create friendship patterns that vary

from one society to another (Adams and Blieszner 1994), sociological emphasis has tended to focus on structural issues. Georg Simmel (1900/1989), unlike the other founding scholars in the discipline, specifically discussed friendship as an important social form (*Wechselwirkung*) among individuals occupying the same social position. He argued that it involves two main emotions: faithfulness and gratitude. These two emotions produce not only strong ties between individuals but are also key elements for the continuity of institutions and, hence, for society's stability (Flam 2002; Simmel 1900/1989). In similar terms, perspectives such as network theory emphasise the importance of analyzing the different forms of friendship networks and the type of resources, such as social capital, that they provide (Greco 2012; Parks-Yancy 2006). Others have noted how friendship operates within the constraints of class, gender, age and ethnicity (Allan 1977; Bidart 1997; Di Nicola 2006; Fischer and Oliker 1983; Kao and Joyner 2005; Mandich 2003; Marks 1998; O'Connor 1998; Oliker 1998; Walker 1994). Friendship is not just produced by but can produce social stratification (Allan 1977, 1998; Silver 1990) and can reinforce and reproduce palpable social differences (Rawlings 1992).

However, friendship is both subject to social change and helps individuals maintain some sense of a stable identity. Some authors have argued that the great social and cultural transformations in Western intimacy since the 1960s, have had an impact in enhancing the role friendship plays in personal life (Allan 2008; Ghisleni and Rebughini 2006; Oliker 1998; Pahl 2000; Weeks 2007). Other important changes have occurred around friendship and intimacy in the workplace. For instance, feminist research has shed light on the different kind of 'work culture' amongst the increasing numbers of women in the workforce (see Marks 1998). This hints at the importance of friendship in how identity is experienced. From a phenomenological perspective friendship is understood as "a specific social relation based on an exchange of an *intimate trust* between the individuals involved in the relationship that foresees regularity and continuity and a true representation of one's identity" (Ghisleni and Rebughini 2006, p. 54).

The interactive component of friendship, is one of its key dimensions, the others being an emotional component—especially trust and reciprocity, which are necessary for happy friendships. Also self-narration to friends is crucial to the construction of personal identity and the recognition of the Self (Ghisleni and Rebughini 2006). The construction and development of a friendship across the entire life course of a person, is an articulated, complex and multidimensional social interaction (Ghisleni and Rebughini 2006, p. 41). Within these friendship interactions, strong feelings and sentiments are the "glue". Emotions may include affection and joy, but also anger and sorrow due to the friend's deceptions (Ghisleni and Rebughini 2006). The initial elective affinity and emotional involvement lead to a profound emotional intimacy between friends, which also characterizes other intimate relationships such as love relationships in contemporary societies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Giddens 1992). However, much of personal life is still structured by inequalities (Jamieson 1999; Smart 2007) and, hence, still far away from the optimistic "pure relationship", conceptualized by Giddens (1992). Indeed, in more recent times with the separation of commercial relations and personal life, "friendship could become

a matter of sympathy and affection devoid of calculation of interest" (Jamieson 1999, p. 480) and necessity. Emotional intimacy develops between friends thanks to the disclosure and free expression of emotions such as joy and happiness but also sadness, sorrow, and depression. These emotions are related to the experiences and memories that are narrated *to* the friend who is actively involved in listening to his/her friend, or experiences these emotions with the friend. Hence, we understand emotion neither as reducible to inner emotional states nor as just an external "pure stimulus" to which the individual reacts. An emotion is not as an "inbuilt" mental or bodily reaction or instinct. Rather emotions are "done in interaction with others; they involve bodies, thought, talk and action" (Holmes 2010, p 149). Recent research suggests that an awareness of the salience of emotions in adult friendship is evident amongst men and women respondents belonging to different ages and generations (Ghisleni and Rebughini 2006). This challenges earlier findings about gender differences around friendship (for example Fischer and Oliker 1983; Nardi 1992) with women underlining more the emotional dimension of friendship (what you feel for and with a friend) and men the instrumental dimension (what you do with a friend). In all cases, trust (defined as "a confident expectation regarding another's behaviour" (Barbalet 2009, p. 2; see also Bandelj 2009; Beckert 2005) [3]; Lewis and Weigert 1985) is necessary between friends to make sure that confidences are not betrayed; that the friend can expect that his/her friend behaves properly and in line with his/her commitments. Reciprocity is also important in ensuring ongoing, happiness-promoting friendships. Feelings of obligation to friends make a person "*indebted* to the donor, and he remains so until he repays" (Gouldner 1960, p. 21), thus contributing to the stability of the relationship. Disruption to the norm of reciprocity can lead to a crisis in the friendship, or in more extreme cases, to the friendship breaking down (Ghisleni and Rebughini 2006). Where friendships promote happiness they also do so by permitting, through the narration of the Self to the friend, the disclosure and construction of personal identity and the recognition of the Self (Ghisleni and Rebughini 2006). Indeed, as the Italian sociologist Alberto Melucci affirmed: "to narrate has to do with identity in two senses: not only because individuals construct themselves through the narration but also because they present themselves to others" (Melucci 2000, p. 115). This presentation is key to social recognition (Jedlowski 2000) and to happy friendships, because needs and emotions can, to a certain extent, only gain confirmation by being directly satisfied or reciprocated, "recognition itself must possess the character of affective approval or encouragement" (Honneth 1995, p. 118).

In friendship the recognition of the Other is not only experienced as a cognitive process for the persons involved in the relationship but primarily as a strong emotional process. Indeed, as the psychoanalytic tradition has underlined, emotional conditions are of primary importance for the development of personhood. The desire to be recognized and accepted produces trust in the individual and their capacities and abilities (Honneth 1995). This trust is a pre-condition for being active in all other social spheres. Indeed, the increase in self-esteem that derives from the recognition by others of the individual's capabilities and skills, but also of their inner value, produces emotions such as pride. Kemper (1978) similarly argues that pride

arises from an increase in status and represents an important source for the *emotional stability* of a person. It is not only a simple recognition and acceptance of the self but an ongoing identity formation process especially in moments of great difficulty. A friend's support can involve not only giving advice but offering a new perspective for looking at our self, sometimes being harsh and critical to support a transformation (Ghisleni and Rebughini 2006). However, as will be discussed, friendship can breakdown in ways that provoke a misrecognition of the Other. This misrecognition of the friend makes the separation from him/her particularly emotionally painful—frustration, anger, depression result—leading to a final breakdown of the friendship.

Friendship and Happiness in Different Social Spheres

Friendship is vital to happiness in many areas of social life, but in this section we will focus on two examples to elaborate how and why it is important and how sociologists study it. The first example is friendship at work, the other example is friendship as conducted online via social media like Facebook.

As we have seen, a sociology of happiness and friendship can contribute to understanding the reproduction of, or resistance to, social relations of power, and this is evident in examining the workplace. Sociologists have underlined the complexity of work organizations as social systems (Selznick 1948), regulated by norms and values where workers occupy different positions in terms of power and status and where social interactions can be consensual but also conflicting, as with those between managers and workers (Arensberg 1951; Roy 1960; Dalton 1959). In the sociological literature of organization the topic of friendship has been long neglected because organizations have been conceived of as pure places of production governed by rigid rational principles aimed at maximizing profits (Greco 2012). This simplified economic conception of work organizations has been questioned by sociologists since the 1930s and 1940s. Indeed, our research on friendship in adulthood (Ghisleni et al. 2012) found that working with a friend-colleague, rather than other workers makes the work much more passionate, more fun and pleasant because the work is easier due to the collaboration but also because it permits workers to express their inner-world and related emotions more openly (Greco 2012). Having friend-colleagues also means that work is interspersed by moments of leisure time, for example singing songs together, having a chat or a cup of tea. All this leads to positive emotions such as joy and happiness which make work much more pleasant, satisfying and, as one of our interviewees' notes "much more pleasant and productive" (Greco 2012, p. 142). Only in the last two decades have sociologists analysed in more depth the relationship between co-workers and pointed out the importance of emotions and friendship in such relationships (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995) and the impact on workers' performance and satisfaction (see Alison and Montague 1998; Farrell 2001; Lincoln and Miller 1979).

Moments of leisure time during working hours give co-workers the opportunity to relax in the midst of a tough and competitive working day, made of stressful

moments and of feelings of anxiety and, hence, to express emotions of happiness and well-being. Such breaks from the working routine have been conceptualized in the sociological literature as *organizational time-outs* which "refers to the moments connected with work but placed outside of the everyday working context and its routine" (Corigliano 2001, p. 37; see also May, 1999; Roy 1960). These *time-outs* as Corigliano states (2001, p. 37) drawing on Van Maanen and Kunda's ethnographical research (Van Maanen and Kunda 1989), are moments in "which the norms that regulate the social relations are suspended and redefined according to the new situation". A song, or a joke about a banana (Roy 1960), represent a clear signal that a *time-out* is going to start. These *time -outs* give the opportunity for *role release* (Goffman 1967) from the formal rules of the role but remain at the same time inside an institutionalized and predictable framework. These time-outs, as other scholars have underlined, are themselves regulated by implicit emotional norms: they do not represent moments of free expression of the "emotional Self" (Flam 1990) and the related free expression of emotions. When these time-outs are repeated and become a kind of ritual, they have the function of strengthening the sense of solidarity, the complicity and affect between the friend-co-workers (May 1999; Roy 1960).

Besides this playful dimension of friendship in adulthood at the workplace, which strengthens the relationship between co-workers and enhances a sense of belonging to the work organization, the role of a friend-colleague allows quicker integration into the work organisation and the working career. Indeed, with a friend co-worker it is generally easier to acquire specific abilities and competences needed in the organization thanks to daily interactions at the workplace with the friend co-worker. In addition, in big and competitive work organizations having a friend co-worker is crucial since he/she helps to build strategic alliances, which can support their working career. Moreover, friendship at work represents a solid barrier against negative attacks from other co-workers, interested in "eliminating" other workers in order to reach the more rewarding and successful positions inside the organization. As we have seen, ameliorating his/her working career and not being expelled from the labor market leads generally to a happier life, especially if work is satisfying and complex.

Friendship also fosters solidarity and collaboration in moments of stress, which supports workers by enabling them to continue with their work responsibility and goals. When the individual worker is the victim of important critical events (Schmid 1998)—such as tragedies in the form of the death of relatives or a serious illness (such as a heart attack), to have a friend-colleague is of great help in allowing them to express their emotions of suffering and sadness. This helps them to deal with the tragedy, supports their emotional stability (Ghisleni 2006) and assists in reconstructing the self. The friend supports the reconstruction of the self by reflecting a positive representation of the Other and therefore encouraging self-esteem, which is a key element for a positive identity formation. In addition, workers experiencing difficulties do not feel abandoned and isolated because the friend-colleague provides a link to the work organization which allowed them to continue working and to not lose their jobs. In such situations, there is a reinforcing process that Ghisleni

(2006, p. 141) calls the "circularity of the dynamic of identification-recognition" which strongly reinforces the friendship.

Friends also help in maintaining or restoring happiness in the face of a critical event to which workers are more and more exposed, that is the loss of their jobs due to organizational restructuring, the end of an employment contract, economic crisis, or the need of a more appropriate self-realization at work. During these employment transitions from one economic status to another (employed to unemployed and then vice versa) (Schmid 1998), typical within the current post-Fordist production paradigm, friends play a significant role. These employment transitions are generally experienced by individuals as periods full of distress and anxiety for the future, with great suffering in rediscovering a meaningful direction in life and a new work identity. These experiences can lead to social vulnerability and exclusion (Greco 2000). Hence, friends help alleviate the suffering, unhappy moments and assist in regaining self-confidence. In some cases, friends support re-entry into the labor market by facilitating the finding of a job (Greco 2012).

Another insight that a sociological approach to friendship and happiness offers is that changing social conditions and ways of relating may be making friendship not just useful at work, but turning it into the most important form of intimate relationship (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001; Ghisleni 2012; Roseneil 2005), central to personal happiness. Changing technology provides one example. Online social media sites like Facebook are becoming important in the way friendships are managed, for large numbers of people. Advice about Facebook etiquette available on the internet indicates that a variety of emotional alternatives are possible and there is a more participatory and egalitarian negotiation of relational and emotional norms (Holmes 2011). Beer and Burrows (2007) argue that technologies change so quickly that sociologists cannot keep up. Neither it seems can the people using them and reassurance is sought from their user communities. In relation to previous social changes, Norbert Elias (1939/2000) traced a formalisation of manners in which bodily and emotional self-restraint grew in importance up until the nineteenth century. Wouters (2007) argued that the twentieth century saw a relaxing of etiquette and an emotionality that was diversified and democratised, but also reliant on more individual reflexivity. Online as well as offline presentation of self suggests less emotional restraint within societies where egalitarian relations are now seen as ideal, and friendship is thought the model of that ideal (Roseneil 2005). However, it is difficult to know when to happily enjoy less restraint with "friends" within current complex and blurring boundaries between friendship and other kinds of intimate relationship (Spencer and Pahl 2006). Especially difficult can be shifting between the more formal manners still usually expected in relating to "friends" of higher social status and the informality required by peers. It can be emotionally difficult to manage diverse audiences, but people friend selectively and edit and limit their posts and profiles with some "friends". Many are playful and funny in their use of social networks, although role conflict is often an issue in dealing with parents, bosses and peers being able to see posts (Holmes 2011).

Online rules of etiquette are expected to follow those offline and it is still the case that people friend and "defriend" others carefully in order to avoid hurting

people or making them unhappy (Holmes 2011). Users of Facebook and other social media may be advised to exercise self-restraint in avoiding rudeness or nastiness, partly because general principles of pacification (Elias 1939/2000) apply. Turning down friend requests needs to be carefully done as part of displaying a civilised self whilst maintaining a sense of having high quality friendships. Those overly free in friending may be accused of being a Facebook "whore", who has too many friends and is too interested in self-display (Holland and Harpin 2008, pp. 126). Removing someone from your list of friends or defriending also requires some care. The potential emotional consequences of severing friendship ties are still thought to be serious if there is a 'real' intimacy. It is hard to avoid embarrassment and to maintain "real" friendships that enhance happiness and well being within the quickly shifting diversity of contemporary relationships.

Some informalising of emotional norms has occurred, but happiness in the twenty-first century is not free of power struggles (Ahmed 2010). Social constraints are more varied and uncertain, but still centre around status relations within key social settings such as family, education and work. In looking at online advice about Facebook etiquette we can see people discussing how they should feel about friendship and attend to the feelings of others, given that the guiding force of tradition has considerably lessened and greater complexity emerged. Relationality is more diverse but not necessarily more fluid and flexible. People are unsure about how to feel in the range of types of interactions they experience both on and offline. The complex diversity of friendship interactions within contemporary life requires emotional reflexivity, which means reflecting and acting based on interpretation of ones own and other peoples' feelings (Holmes 2011).

People are reflexive in considering how to create happy friendships and other relationships, but happiness is not inevitably linked to friendly relations. Why some might be more effective in employing emotional reflexivity to achieve happiness requires further research. It is clear that finding happiness in friendships has to be negotiated around the possibilities and constraints of particular sets of social relations. Within expanded definitions of friendship, differing social status can still make friendships a problem. Co-workers might become valuable friends and contribute to individual happiness and well-being, but friending your boss or kids might be more likely to produce anxiety or embarrassment. Friends can be a valuable resource in finding a job or providing support during difficult times, but some friends might be less helpful in such circumstances and more just for fun (Spencer and Pahl 2006). Sometimes friendship might undermine happiness, sometimes it might enhance it. The task of sociology is to analyse the ways in which current social conditions are likely to produce particular kinds of connection between friendship and happiness.

Concluding Remarks

Sociologists question whether happiness and friendship inevitably go together and consider how the relationship between the two depends very much on the kinds of social meanings and social conditions in which friendship is played out. Focusing

on happiness may not always be a good thing for individuals or societies, whether this focus produces well-being will depend on changing social conditions. Research on the social conditions for happiness presently suggests that the kinds of conditions that produce happiness are varied. Forms of happiness that translate into well-being for most people are likely to rely on having strong welfare regimes, are not necessarily related to personal or national wealth but more likely to occur where there is greater social equality. More people are likely to be happier where there is greater social and political participation and hope of social mobility (usually linked to good levels of education). Certain individual attributes are likely to contribute to happiness such as religious belief, good mental and physical health, an empathetic outlook and strong connections to others. The latter suggests that friendship, as it becomes increasingly important in people's intimate lives, will be crucial to happiness. However, sociologists have debated about whether friendship produces social cohesion or reproduces inequalities. Friendship networks can help some individuals 'get ahead' but may keep others linked to violent or dangerous communities or make life difficult for the lack of the "right" connections. However, friendships can promote individual happiness by enhancing a sense of stable identity and allowing for emotional intimacy, expressed within trusting and reciprocal relationships. This can allow both better recognition of others and positive self-development. All these features of friendship and happiness are apparent in the examples we give relating to the social spheres of work and online social media. These examples contribute to considering under what kinds of social conditions happiness can be achieved through friendship in ways likely to enhance well-being for the majority.

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