Matchmaking Promotes Happiness

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RUNNING HEAD: Matchmaking Promotes Happiness

Matchmaking Promotes Happiness

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Abstract

Four studies document and explore the psychology underlying people's proclivity to connect people to each other – to play "matchmaker." First, Study 1 shows that chronic matchmaking is associated with higher well-being. Studies 2 and 3 show that matching others on the basis of how well they will get along leads to a greater increase in happiness and is more intrinsically rewarding than other tasks (e.g., deciding which people would *not* get along). Study 4 investigates a moderator of the rewarding nature of matchmaking: the type of connection. We show that bridging ties are relatively more attractive than bonding ties: the more unlikely the match, the more rewarding it is. Taken together, these studies provide correlational and causal evidence for the role of matchmaking in promoting happiness.

Matchmaking Promotes Happiness

At some point, most people have made matches between others, from grabbing two strangers by the arm at a party and introducing them to each other to brokering romantic connections. Indeed, social networking websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn increasingly make brokering such introductions as effortless as a few clicks of a mouse. Or, if not matchmakers themselves, many people can think of a friend or acquaintance notorious for their efforts to make such introductions – even if sometimes awkwardly unsuccessful. In fact, people often err on the side of "overintroduction," checking to make sure that two people know each other only to find that the two are already acquainted. Despite its ubiquity, the psychological drivers of such matchmaking have received little attention, with some perspectives suggesting that matchmaking has negative costs to the matchmaker. We investigate the proclivity to make matches between others, demonstrating that such matchmaking – creating ties between others – is both intrinsically rewarding and pays in the form of increased well-being: encouraging people to become matchmakers by inducing them to connect people to each other has a causal impact on their happiness.

Certainly, a great deal of evidence suggests that people enjoy connecting *themselves* to others and that having such social connections is strongly associated with well-being. Humans spend some 80% of their waking hours in the company of others (Emler, 1994; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004), such that their dual needs of being alone and belonging often tip towards the latter (Aronson, 1988; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Moreover, having connections with others is associated with better objective and subjective well-being (Myers, 1999). Having more discrete types of social relationships is associated with increased longevity (Berkman, 1995) and better physical health outcomes (Berkman et al., 2000; Cohen,

1988; House et al., 1988; Seeman, 1996; Uchino, 2004). Social relationships not only impact objective but also subjective well-being (Andrews et al., 1978; Henderson, 1980; Miller & Ingham, 1976), such that having a rich network of close family and friends correlates with psychological well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Fleeson, Malanos, & Achille, 2002).

Matchmaking and Happiness

The above research clearly demonstrates the positive impact ties *between the self and others* have on well-being, but the possibility that initiating connections *between others* might also impact well-being remain unexplored. In short, we explore the emotional benefits of making matches not between oneself and others, but between two other people. We note that matchmaking takes many forms, from romantic matchmaking (e.g., connecting partners for dates) to social matchmaking (e.g., introducing friends and acquaintances) to professional matchmaking (e.g., linking two colleagues). Though the term "matchmaking" is most commonly associated with romantic efforts, we use the term to refer to a broad category of connections to explore the general emotional benefits of matchmaking.

Why might people find matchmaking rewarding? Existing research suggests that the benefits of matchmaking may arise due to a variety of motivations. First, matchmaking may allow the matchmaker to send positive signals to the self and others. Introducing unacquainted individuals may allow matchmakers to signal positive traits such as social acumen and intelligence to themselves (Bem 1972; Bodner & Prelec, 2003). But people also engage in public displays – such as conspicuous consumption – to signal their status and power to others (Becker 1974; Glazer & Konrad, 1996; Griskevicius et al. 2007); being the person who brings others together may signal one's status in the social network. Indeed, connecting two people who form a lasting partnership – whether romantic, platonic, or professional – may put those individuals in

the matchmakers' debt, leading them to reciprocate in the future (Cialdini, 1993). Relatedly, matchmaking may signal that the matchmaker is a helpful person, which may increase others' likelihood of behaving generously to the matchmaker; indeed, matchmaking increases the density of social networks, which has been shown to facilitate trust and cooperation (Coleman, 1990; Ibarra, 1992). In addition to these somewhat self-interested benefits of matchmaking, matchmakers may also have altruistic motivations: to increase the happiness and well-being of others. The act of connecting two lonely people, for example, might be driven by a desire to increase their happiness; altruistic behaviors have been shown to have emotional benefits for both givers and receivers (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008). Thus given the variety of research supporting a possible link between matchmaking and well-being, we suggest that matchmaking may promote happiness.

Overview

We first explore whether chronic matchmakers – those who habitually connect others in their everyday lives – have higher well-being (Study 1). Next, we measure the benefits of matchmaking in two ways, by both assessing people's happiness before and after they engage in matchmaking (Study 2) and examining people's intrinsic willingness to persist at creating connections between others (Study 3). We pit the rewarding nature of matchmaking against another kind of reward – money – and explore whether paying people to make matches between others "crowds out" their inherent desire to create connections (Study 3). Finally, Study 4 investigates a moderator of the rewarding nature of matchmaking: the type of connection.

Study 1: Matchmaking Correlates with Well-Being

Study 1 offers an initial examination of the relationship between chronic matchmaking and overall well-being. In addition, because chronic matchmakers may also have larger social

networks, in and of itself a predictor of well-being (Burt, 1987; Chan & Lee, 2006), we examine the link between matchmaking and well-being while controlling for network size. Since matchmakers may have personality traits (e.g., extraversion) that correlate with well-being (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998), we also control for personality traits. In an online survey, participants rated their propensity to make matches between others and their perceived success at matchmaking, reported their total number of acquaintances and friends, and completed well-validated scales assessing subjective well-being and personality.

Method

A sample of 301 participants (32% female; M_{age}=29.1, *SD*=9.2) were recruited on Amazon's Mechanical Turk services for a 5-minute study on social interactions, and were paid $.25.

Respondents rated their propensity to make matches between others and their perceived success at matchmaking. We used four items to assess people's propensity to make matches between others: *I introduce my acquaintances to each other*; *I introduce my friends to each other*; *I set up my friends on dates*; *I am a resource for people around me to find social and professional connections* (Cronbach's *α*=.81). These items were rated on a 4-point scale (1: *not at all true of me* to 4: *very true of me*). We used four items to assess their perceived success at making connections: *How good are you at connecting your friends with each other? How good are you at connecting your acquaintances with each other? How good are you at setting up your friends on dates? What percent of these dates are successful?* (Cronbach's *α*=.85). The first three items were rated on a 10-point scale (1: *not at all good at it* to 10: *extremely good at it*), and participants provided open ended responses to the percentage question; we standardized these items to create the composite measure.

Respondents also reported their total number of acquaintances and total number of friends, and completed Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin's (1985) well-being scale (Cronbach's α=.85). Finally, participants completed the ten-item personality inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), which contains two items measuring each of the Big Five personality dimensions (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experiences). Using a 7-point scale (1: *disagree strongly* to 7: *agree strongly*), participants rated the extent to which they felt each of the five traits applied to them.

Results

Both propensity to make matches and perceived success at matchmaking were positively correlated with well-being, *rs*=.36 and .37, *ps*<.001. Interestingly, the seven individual items for each scale (four for propensity, three for perceived success) displayed striking consistency in their correlation with well-being, .24<*rs*<.35, all *ps*<.001. Thus despite the different types of matchmaking assessed – from setting up friends on dates (*r*=.28) to introducing friends to each other (*r*=.31) – matchmaking appears to have a consistent positive relationship with well-being.

Number of acquaintances and number of friends were each correlated with propensity, *rs*=.13 and .12, *ps*<.04, and perceived success, *rs*=.15 and .14, *ps*<.02. However, when we controlled for number of friends and acquaintances, the relationships between well-being and both propensity and perceived success remained significant, β*s*=.36 and .37, *ps*<.001. Moreover, when we controlled for the five personality dimensions in regressions predicting well-being, the relationships between well-being and both propensity and perceived success also remained significant, β*s*=.25 and .24, *ps*<.001. In the regressions for both propensity and perceived success, emotional stability predicted well-being, *ps*<.001; extraversion was a significant

predictor in the former analysis, *p*<.05, and marginally significant in the latter, *p*=.055; no other factors emerged as significant predictors in either analysis, *ps*>.07.

While we replicated previous findings that extraversion and emotional stability are both positively related to well-being, we demonstrate a significant relationship between propensity to make matches and perceived success at matchmaking when controlling for these and other personality variables, and when controlling for the size of participants' social networks. These results provide preliminary correlational evidence that chronic matchmakers are happier with their lives, over and above any effect of the size of their networks or their personality traits.

Study 2: Matchmaking in the Laboratory

In Study 2, we tested the causal impact of matchmaking on happiness in a laboratory setting by assigning people to match individuals to each other and measuring their happiness before and after the matching task. In addition, we investigated whether the type of match matters by randomly assigning people to one of three tasks: making matches on the basis of who would get along well (the *match* condition*)*, who would get along poorly (*mismatch*), and who had the most similar social security numbers (*random).* We included the *random* condition to examine whether matchmaking based on any similarity would increase happiness or whether the emotional benefits of matchmaking are specific to meaningful connections. We included both the *match* and *mismatch* conditions because each required participants to think about social relationships between others, which may have been interesting in its own right. We expected, however, that matching people with the goal of creating connections (*match*) would lead to greater happiness than matching on other dimensions (*mismatch* or *random*).

Method

Participants (*N*=118; 61% female, M_{age}=22.5, *SD*=4.4) were recruited from the subject pool of a university in the northeastern United States for a study about "the sharing of daily experience" that paid $12. Participants completed the study in groups of six; two participants did not show such that our final sample consisted of 18 groups of six and two groups of five participants.

Participants first reported their happiness by marking a 17cm line with endpoints *not at all happy* and *very happy* (Morewedge, Gilbert, Keysar, Berkovits, & Wilson, 2007). Next, all participants were seated in a circle and introduced themselves to each other by stating their name, place of birth, occupation, and hobbies; we included this "warm up" task to give them some basis for making connections between their session-mates. After completing the "warm up" task, participants were informed that they would be making matches between others in the room, and each group was randomly assigned to one of three tasks. In the *match* condition, participants were asked to match pairs of people who they thought would get along well; those in the *mismatch* condition were asked to match pairs who they thought would not get along well; those in the *random* condition were asked to match pairs who they thought had the most similar last two digits of their social security numbers. In order to increase involvement in the matching task, participants were informed that the pairs they selected would interact in the next part of the study.

Next, participants again completed the same happiness measure. Based on the matches made by participants, three pairs were selected to move to a separate room for a 5-minute interaction in which they told each other more about themselves. Finally, participants were debriefed and compensated.

Results

Participants were nested in groups which were in turn nested within the three conditions. Therefore, we conducted a 3 (condition: *match*, *mismatch*, *random*) X 2 (time of measurement: *pre task*, *post task*) mixed effects model with random factors for participants, groups, and the groups by time of measurement interaction, which revealed the predicted significant interaction between condition and time of measurement, $F(2, 115)= 6.22$, $p=.003$, $\eta_p^2=.10$. As our account suggests, contrasts revealed that participants in the *match* condition experienced a significant increase in pre-matching ($M=10.49$, $SD=2.57$) to post-matching happiness ($M=11.16$, $SD=2.29$), $t(115)=3.10$, $p=.003$. If anything, happiness declined in both the *mismatch* ($Ms=10.97$ and 10.53, $SDs=3.34$ and 3.29) and *random* conditions ($Ms=11.86$ and 11.60, $SDs=2.73$ and 2.46), although these differences were not significant, $ps>.11$. Further contrasts showed that the boost in happiness in the *match* condition was significantly greater than the decrease in happiness in both the *mismatch* and *random* conditions, $ps<.004$.[1]

In sum, Study 2 offers initial evidence that assigning people to matchmaking increases their happiness – but only when that matching is done in the service of creating connections between others.

Study 3: Matchmaking is Intrinsically Rewarding

In Study 3, we assessed the benefits of matchmaking between others using a different methodology: Rather than measuring happiness directly, we measured the intrinsic reward of matchmaking by examining people's persistence on one of two tasks: matching which of three people a target individual would either get along with best (*match)* or looks most like (*appearance*).

We also varied whether participants completed each trial of the task for free, for 1¢, or for 2¢, a design that allowed us to document the intrinsic reward of matchmaking in two ways.

First, we expected that participants would be willing to complete more trials of the *match* task than the *appearance*, providing evidence for greater intrinsic reward of the former task. Second, while we expected that higher pay per trial would increase the number of trials that participants completed of the of the less-intrinsically-rewarding *appearance* task, we explored whether paying participants for the intrinsically rewarding *match* task might actually undermine their motivation and lead them to complete fewer trials. Research shows that providing extrinsic rewards – such as monetary incentives – for completing intrinsically satisfying tasks are not only ineffective but can be detrimental, "crowding out" people's motivation to perform those tasks (Deci, 1975; Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973). As a result, we predicted that providing extrinsic monetary rewards for the intrinsically-rewarding *match* task would diminish participants' motivation to complete this task.

Method

Participants (*N*=168, 54% female, M_{age}=21.6, *SD*=3.8) were recruited from the subject pool of a university in the northeastern United States for a 60-minute session that involved completing a series of unrelated studies that paid $15.

Upon starting the task, participants were informed that they would be completing fifty trials of computer tasks and could choose how to split these fifty trials between two tasks. In the first task, participants were shown a photo of a target individual and asked to match the target with one of three potential matches (see Figure 1 for an example of the task). Participants were randomly assigned to one cell of a 2 (condition: *match*, *appearance*) X 3 (incentives: *free, 1¢, 2¢*) design. Participants were either asked to select the person with whom the target would get along best (*match*) or the person who was most physically similar to the target (*appearance*); in addition, they either completed the task without incentives (*free*), or were told they would

receive either *1¢* or *2¢* for each trial. After each trial, they were given the choice to complete another trial of this task or switch to work on a second task. The second (letter) task – designed to be boring – consisted of finding a target letter in a pull-down menu of four letters.

Participants were instructed that they would begin with the first task (*match* or *appearance*) and could complete all fifty trials of that task or move on to the letter task whenever they wished. After completing a practice trial of each task, they began with the *match* or *appearance* task. Our dependent variable was the number of trials completed in the first task (*match* or *appearance*) before switching to the letter task.

Results

Pretest. We pretested task enjoyment with a separate group of participants ($N=103$, 58.4% female, $M_{age}=34.4$, $SD=11.8$) who completed one trial of each task (*match, appearance, letter*) and rated them on enjoyment on a 7-point scale (1: *not at all* to 7: *very much*). Ratings of the matching task ($M=4.21$, $SD=1.70$) and appearance task ($M=4.25$, $SD=1.64$) did not differ, $F(1, 102)=.05$, $p=.83$; as expected, both received higher ratings than the letter task ($M=2.42$, $SD=1.69$), $Fs>80.00$, $ps<.001$.

Number of trials. A 2 (condition: *match*, *appearance*) X 3 (incentives: *free, 1¢, 2¢*) ANOVA revealed no main effect of condition, $F(1, 161)=2.50$, $p=.12$, or incentives, $F(2, 161)=.86$, $p=.47$, but did reveal the predicted interaction, $F(2, 161)=5.11$, $p<.01$, $\eta_p^2=.10$ (Figure 2). First, as expected, participants in the *free* conditions completed more than twice as many trials of the *match* task ($M=31.10$, $SD=20.25$) than the *appearance* task ($M=14.82$, $SD=15.34$), $t(57)=3.45$, $p<.001$, $d=.90$, suggesting that connecting others in terms of liking is intrinsically more rewarding than connecting others for physical similarity.

Our second means of demonstrating intrinsic liking for the *match* task was to examine how additional monetary incentives would differentially impact people's desire to complete additional trials of both the *appearance* and *match* task. As expected, incentives increased the number of trials participants chose to complete of the *appearance* task, in a significant linear trend from *free* to *1¢* to *2¢* (*M*s=14.82, 17.07, and 26.27, *SD*s=15.33, 17.49, and 21.45), $t(82)=2.37$, $p=.02$. In contrast, providing incentives for the *match* task resulted in a significantly *decreased* willingness to complete trials both for participants in the *1¢* and *2¢* conditions *(M*s=20.25 and 20.18, *SD*s=18.53 and 19.40) compared to those in the *free* condition (*M*=31.10, *SD*=20.24), $ts>2.04$, $ps<.05$ (Figure 2). These results suggest that while payment increased motivation for the less intrinsically appealing *appearance* task, incentives crowded out motivation for the more intrinsically appealing *match* task – such that paying more led to completing fewer trials.

Indeed, one final piece of evidence speaks to the inherently rewarding nature of the *match* task: we needed to pay 2¢ per trial for the *appearance* task in order to induce people to complete even close to as many trials as they were willing to complete of the match task for free.

One possible explanation for our results is that happiness from matchmaking is due merely to having completed a task successfully. We conducted an additional study in which we both controlled for successful completion of the task and measured subjective feelings of success. Participants (*N*=121, 58% female, M_{age}=33.6, *SD*=11.7) completed a similar computer paradigm as in Study 3, with two changes. In order to control for the successful completion of the task, all participants were assigned to complete 10 trials. And rather than two conditions, they were assigned to one of three conditions: matching which of three people a target individual would either get along with best (*match)* or least (*mismatch)*, or which the target resembled most

(*appearance*). Participants rated their happiness before and after the task on a 7-point scale (1:

very unhappy to 7: *very happy*) as well as how successful they thought they were at making these

matches on a 7-point scale (1: *very unsuccessful* to 7: *very successful*). A 3 (condition: *match*,

mismatch, *appearance*) X 2 (time of measurement: *pre task*, *post task*) ANOVA revealed the

predicted interaction between condition and time, $F(2, 118)= 5.83$, $p=.004$, $\eta_p{}^2=.09$. Replicating

our previous results, participants in the *match* condition experienced a significant increase from

pre-matching ($M=5.19$, $SD=1.18$) to post-matching happiness ($M=5.36$, $SD=1.11$), $t(42)=2.47$,

$p=.02$. Happiness declined in both the *mismatch* ($Ms=5.02$ and 4.76, $SDs=.95$ and 1.26) and

appearance conditions ($Ms=5.36$ and 5.08, $SDs=1.07$ and 1.05), and these differences were

significant, $ps<.04$. However, a one-way ANOVA revealed no differences between participants'

perceived success at the different tasks, $F(2, 118)=1.91$, $p=.15$. These results suggest that

matchmaking itself – and not merely the successful completion of tasks – is uniquely rewarding.

Study 4: What Kinds of Matches Are Most Rewarding?

In Study 3, we explored a moderating factor of the impact of matchmaking on happiness:

the type of connection. We posited that one reason that people find matchmaking rewarding is

because it creates novel connections that increase network density. If this is the case, then

creating matches between people who are unlikely to know each other should prove more

rewarding than creating matches between people who are likely to know each other, because the

former matches have more potential to increase network density (Gittell & Vidal, 1998).

Bridging ties, which connect people who previously did not know each other, offer rare and

more novel opportunities for creating social capital at the level of the group; *bonding* ties, on the

other hand, offer fewer benefits to the group as they primarily connect people who already have

ties in common. We operationalized bridging and bonding ties by varying the gender and race of

the people being matched; research suggests that similar people are more likely to interact than dissimilar people, such that creating a connection between members of different groups (e.g., a White male with an Asian female) is more likely to be a bridging tie than a connection made between members of the same group (e.g., two White males; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001).

Using several versions of the *match* task from the previous studies, we explored whether creating bridging ties – connecting people who were less likely to be acquainted – would be more rewarding than creating bonding ties.

Method

Participants (N=132, 49% female, M_{age}=21.1, SD=3.6) were recruited from the subject pool of a university in the northeastern United States for a 90-minute session that involved completing a series of unrelated studies that paid $20.

As in Study 3, participants completed fifty trials of two tasks: the matching task or boring letter task; also as in Study 3, they could choose to complete as many trials of each task as they chose. All participants completed a version of the *match* task from the previous study, but were randomly assigned to one of eight different versions. In each version, the target individual was always either a Caucasian male or a Caucasian female; to manipulate the likelihood that the target individual would know the two possible matches, we varied the gender and race of the two matches – Caucasian males, Caucasian females, Asian males, or Asian females. We collapsed these eight versions into three levels of ties – same race and same gender versions (*bonding ties*), different gender and different race versions (*bridging ties*), or same race and different gender or different gender and same race versions (*medium ties*) (See Figure 3 for examples of ties).

Results

Pretest. We pretested these combinations to ensure that they successfully manipulated tie level. In a within-subjects design, a separate group of participants (N=116, 47% female, M_{age}=29.2, SD=9.1) were shown fifty trials including examples from the eight different versions. They rated the likelihood that the target person would know one of the two people below on a 7-point scale (1: *extremely unlikely* to 7: *extremely likely*). *Bonding ties* were rated as having a higher likelihood of knowing each other (M=4.78, SD=.94) than both *medium ties* (M=4.07, SD=.86) and *bridging ties* (M=3.52, SD=.95), F(2, 931)=118.69, p<.001; all three ratings were significantly different from each other, all ts>7.68, all ps<.001 .

Number of trials. Type of tie impacted the number of matching trials completed, F(2, 128)=2.85, p<.05. The linear trend was significant, t(129)=2.92, p<.01), such that participants completed the greatest number of trials in the matching task when matching across *bridging ties* (M=25.03, SD=18.22) followed by *medium ties* (M=19.64, SD=15.73) followed by *bonding ties* (M=13.28, SD=13.98); indeed, participants in the *bridging ties* condition completed nearly twice as many trials as those in the *bonding ties* condition, t(61)=2.88, p<.01.[2]

By definition, bridging ties involved matching people of the same gender whereas bonding ties involved matching people of different genders. If participants made the assumption that the target individuals were heterosexual, it is possible that bonding ties were more rewarding than bridging ties because they involved romantic matchmaking. However, an examination of the different types of medium ties suggests that opposite-gender pairings do not differ from same-gender pairings: Caucasian Female with Caucasian Males (M=18.18), Caucasian Female with Asian Females (M=19.25), Caucasian Male with Asian Males (M=19.44), and Caucasian Male with Caucasian Females (M=21.88), ts <.70, ps>.49. Thus as in Study 1 – in which making

romantic and platonic connections were similarly correlated with well-being – these results offer evidence for the benefits of many types of matchmaking.

General Discussion

Taken together, these studies provided evidence for our proposed link between matchmaking and happiness. Inducing people to make matches between strangers increased happiness in the moment, and people found a task that involved matching others based on their beliefs about their likely rapport to be more intrinsically rewarding than tasks that involved other types of matching. We documented a critical moderator of rewarding nature of matchmaking: creating bridging ties – connecting people who would not otherwise be acquainted – is more rewarding than bonding ties.

Our laboratory studies are, of course, proxies for the kinds of real-world matchmaking in which people engage every day. The fact that this kind of minimalistic matchmaking continues to provide rewards parallels other research suggesting that minimalistic laboratory paradigms – for example, simulating gossip and altruistic punishment (Fehr & Gächter, 2002; Feinberg et al., 2012) – can prove fruitful in shedding light into the everyday emotional consequences of behavior. Importantly, our results demonstrating the emotional benefits of chronic matchmaking further support the notion that matchmaking proves rewarding beyond the laboratory setting. At the same time, investigations that extend our results into everyday settings will offer further insight into the psychology of matchmaking. For example, a daily diary methodology could be used to examine whether people are happier on days when they connect others, while online social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn offer readily-available opportunities to assess both platonic and professional matchmaking.

Our results offer several directions for future research. First, it would be worthwhile to examine whether matchmaking is driven by altruistic or selfish reasons – or a combination of two. Are matchmakers still happy if they make an introduction between two others who leave and interact without them? Relatedly, assessing people's preference for public vs. anonymous matches would test whether social signaling is a driver of matchmaking: people preferring to be recognized for their matches – by the matched pair or observers – would offer evidence that matchmaking is not driven by purely altruistic motivations.

We note that our results stand in seeming contrast to social network research suggesting that matchmaking can come with costs. Burt (2001) posits that social networks are like a market in which some people achieve more prominent places; the benefits to actors with prominent places in the network depend critically on the type of network. Networks with structural holes (where there are missing links between network members), allow some individuals to have more access to resources than others (Coleman, 1990). These brokers are strategically located between others and derive power from refusing to connect others in order to maintain their standing; in this view, matchmaking could have a negative impact as an introduction would come with the cost of the matchmaker's structural advantage (Burt, 1998; Simmel, 1955). Our studies show that closing gaps in social networks by forming ties between others has benefits for the matchmaker in the form of increased happiness. Future research can pit the positive benefits of matchmaking against the benefits of being a broker in a network to examine whether people would engage in matchmaking even when it is costly to do so.

We document a novel means by which people can increase their happiness: as with other behaviors such as spending money on others (Dunn et al., 2008) and performing random acts of kindness (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005), successful matchmaking promotes

happiness in matchmakers. Also, like these other behaviors, matchmaking is easy to implement:

unlike other behaviors which increase happiness, such as exercise and becoming more religious

(Mochon, Norton, & Ariely, 2008), matchmaking doesn't require a great deal of time and effort,

but only introducing two people already in one's social network. Indeed, as noted earlier,

websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn make matchmaking as accessible as sending a quick

email. Moreover, creating successful matches between others also can have additional benefits

that extend beyond the matchmaker to the two newly-acquainted individuals, from providing

them with opportunities for employment (Granovetter, 1973) to increasing their social support.

Even more broadly, matchmaking increases the density of social networks – more people know

more people in common – and this kind of social capital is associated with a range of positive

group-level outcomes including lower crime rates and improved public health (Putnam, 2001).

As a result, the benefits of matchmaking may extend beyond the matchmakers to the matched

dyads and to the wider community.

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Footnotes

1. A 3 (condition: *match, mismatch*, *random*) X 2 (happiness: *pre-task*, *post-task*) X 2 (gender: *male* or *female*) ANOVA revealed no main effect of gender or interactions with gender, all Fs<.72, all ps>.49. Similarly, including gender does not substantially change our results in Studies 2-4; we therefore do not report this variable further.

2. While we collapsed the eight versions into three conditions (*bonding*, *medium*, and *bridging*) for ease of presentation, results for the different forms that each type of tie took were similar. Bonding ties: Caucasian Female with Caucasian Females (M=14.72, SD=16.05), and Caucasian Male with Caucasian Males (M=11.43, SD=11.08); Medium ties: Caucasian Female with Asian Females (M=19.25, SD=17.40), Caucasian Female with Caucasian Males (M=18.18, SD=14.45), Caucasian Male with Asian Males (M=19.44, SD=15.73), and Caucasian Male with Caucasian Females (M=21.88, SD=16.14); Bridging ties: Caucasian Female with Asian Males (M=25.41, SD=18.40), and Caucasian Male with Asian Females (M=24.57, SD=18.69).

Figure 1

Sample trial from the *match* condition (Study 3).

Who do you think would get along best with the focus person?

Focus person

Person 1
(Press 1)

Person 2
(Press 2)

Person 3
(Press 3)

Figure 2

Incentives lead to an increase in number of trials completed in the *appearance* condition, but a decrease in the *match* condition (Study 3).
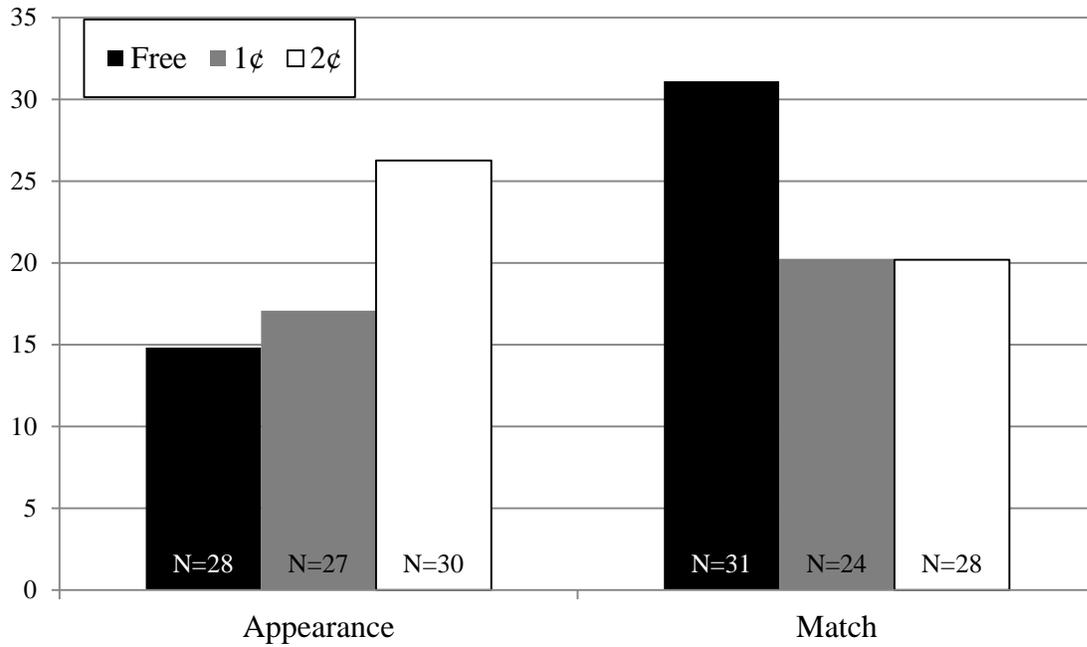
Figure 3

Example bonding tie: Caucasian female target with Caucasian female potential matches (A);

Example medium tie: Caucasian female target with Asian female potential matches (B); Example

bridging tie: Caucasian female target with Asian male potential matches (C) (Study 4)

A   B   C