

Lyubomirsky, S., & Boehm, J. K. (2009). *Human motives, happiness, and the puzzle of parenthood*. Manuscript under review.

Happiness, and its associated positive emotions, is presumed to signal to the individual that an adaptive problem has been solved, thus allowing her to shift attention to other concerns, perhaps ones “higher” on the revised motivational hierarchy proposed by Kenrick et al. In this commentary, we present a sampling of longitudinal and experimental evidence supporting two predictions - 1) that people will feel happy after realizing fundamental human motives, and 2) that in turn, the experience of happiness will galvanize people to fulfill these very motives.

However, one conspicuous exception to our argument that happiness is both a consequence and a stimulus of human motives is parenthood, which paradoxically is associated with *decrements* in well-being. Two broad sets of explanations to account for this puzzle are discussed. The first involves evolutionary accounts - that children interfere with lower-level needs, that short-term costs of having children are outweighed by long-term benefits, and that the modern-day context of raising children is at odds with our ancestors’ environments. The second possibility involves measurement - namely, problems with study designs and the difficulty of capturing on paper or computer screen what is precisely so wonderful and elusive that children grant their parents.