

## REPLY

# In Live Interaction, Does Familiarity Promote Attraction or Contempt? Reply to Norton, Frost, and Ariely (2011)

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In this reply, we address and refute each of Norton, Frost, and Ariely's (2011) specific objections to the conclusion that, *ceteris paribus*, familiarity breeds liking in live interaction. In particular, we reiterate the importance of studying live interaction rather than decontextualized processes. These rebuttals notwithstanding, we concur with Norton et al.'s call for an integrative model that encompasses both Norton, Frost, and Ariely's (2007) results and ours, and we point readers toward a description of a possible model presented in our original article.

*Keywords:* familiarity, attraction, relationship development, friendship formation

We were pleased to receive Norton, Frost, and Ariely's (2011) commentary, because it allows us to clarify important distinctions between our research and theirs (Norton, Frost, & Ariely, 2007). Dialogue helps make science a self-correcting enterprise. Our research was designed in part to correct misleading generalizations from their studies. This reply has a similar aim. We believe that Norton et al.'s commentary misrepresents what our article does and does not say. Herein, we set the record straight and reiterate the key rationale for our research: the importance of studying live interaction.

### The Value of a Live Account

We agree with Norton et al. (2011) about the value of a more integrative account of familiarity effects in the acquaintance process. That is in fact what originally motivated our studies. As explained in our article, Norton et al.'s conclusions contradicted decades of research and theory on the effects of familiarity. Could their studies and the traditional literature be reconciled? We believe that they can, and in our article we offered such an account, using Kruglanski et al.'s (2000) distinction between assessment and locomotion goals. This distinction may help develop the sort

of integrative account that Norton et al. called for in their commentary but neglected in our article. Indeed, Norton et al. misquoted our title by omitting the key qualifying phrase (italicized here for emphasis)—“Familiarity Does Indeed Promote Attraction *in Live Interaction*”—that represents an explicit step toward an integrative account. Despite their emphasis on theoretical integration, we see no such qualifications in Norton et al.'s conclusions.

Briefly, assessment mindsets emphasize critical, analytical reasoning, whereas locomotion mindsets emphasize the commitment of self-regulatory resources toward attaining desired goals. In all but one of their studies, Norton et al.'s (2007) participants were asked to judge another person described only by a list of traits—we think it likely that assessment would dominate in this context. In our studies, participants were asked to interact with another person—conditions that would make salient locomotion toward the goal of a smooth, pleasant interaction. Consistent with this logic, Kumashiro, Rusbult, Finkenauer, and Stocker (2007) found that locomotion facilitates supportive interactions in close relationships, whereas assessment undermines them. Of course, we did not directly evaluate this proposition by manipulating mindsets, so its viability as an integrative principle remains to be established. However, by offering this distinction as a way of reconciling our findings (as well as those of the traditional literature) and Norton et al.'s, we sought to move researchers toward precisely the kind of integrative account that Norton et al. call for but do not describe.

credit).<sup>1</sup> We agree that our paradigms were imperfect replicas of natural first-encounters between strangers; experimentation requires certain controls. It therefore seems fair to ask, what makes a live interaction special? Were those features present in our research? Several features stand out: participants' seeing and hearing each other, interpreting and responding in real-time to each other's behavior and verbalizations, forming trait inferences from the other's statements and behaviors, managing impressions, and pursuing interaction goals. Our Study 1 had all of these features, although the goals (i.e., discussing particular topics) were chosen by the experimenters, not the participants themselves. Our Study 2 did not permit participants to see or hear each other, but it had all the other features. Participants were given no restrictions about what to discuss.

In contrast, Norton et al.'s (2007) experiments had none of these features. Participants formed inferences about a hypothetical person they had no chance of ever encountering based solely on a few adjectives. Norton et al.'s (2011) commentary refers to a "naturalistic experiment" in their original article, but that study (Study 5, whi(a)-39;, 5,

others. Our proposed integrative account would allow for testing this proposition. For present purposes, we suggest that readers consider Weick's (1985) astute question about social psychological research: Which set of paradigms—live, real-time interactions of the sort we created or lists of trait adjectives describing hypothetical persons—comes closer to activating the motives and con-

