Person-by-Situation Perspectives on Close Relationships

Every psychological event depends upon the state of the person and at the same time on the environment, although their relative importance is different in different cases.

Kurt Lewin (1936, p. 12)

Kurt Lewin was the founder of several disciplines in psychology, including social and industrial/organizational psychology. He was, however, much more than a founding father. Lewin was a broad-minded visionary who, with the development of field theory (Lewin, 1948), wanted to explain how forces that reside both within individuals and in their immediate environments motivate people to act in their everyday lives. Thirty years after his famous dictum that behavior cannot be understood unless one considers both who a person is and the environment in which he or she is embedded, psychologists remained embroiled in debates about what explained more variance in social behavior—the dispositions that people have, or the situations in which they find themselves (see Mischel, 1968; Wicker, 1969). The basic answer, of course, was sketched in Lewin’s writings decades earlier. The central theme of this chapter echoes one of Lewin’s deepest insights: To fully understand how and why individuals behave as...
they do, one must discern who they are as people (e.g., their traits, dispositions, values, attitudes), the types of situations to which they are responding, and how these variables sometimes combine (statistically interact) to influence how individuals think, feel, and behave.

In this chapter, we discuss several theories and programs of research in the relationship sciences that have adopted interactional (person-by-situation) approaches to the study of social behavior. As we shall see, some excellent examples of how person-by-situation models can advance our understanding of how and why people behave the way they do already exist in the relationships literature. One of the primary reasons for this is that relationship partners are often the most salient and important "feature of the environment" to which individuals respond in many significant social situations. Most of our attention, therefore, will focus on person-by-situation models and effects that pertain to close relationships.

The chapter is divided into four major sections. In the first section, we briefly overview "interactional" thinking within social and personality psychology, highlighting different approaches to the study of personality and social behavior and discussing how individuals and situations can intersect (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). In the second section, we discuss three major theoretical models that are exemplars of person-by-situation frameworks and have important implications for the study of dispositions within dyadic contexts: the cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) model (Mischel & Shoda, 1995), interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). Each of these theories addresses how certain personality traits or individual differences are likely to combine with certain situations to jointly predict how people think, feel, and behave.

In the third section, we review how different person-by-situation approaches have extended our understanding of individuals within relationships, placing special emphasis on romantic relationships. Specifically, we review research on self-esteem and dependency/risk regulation processes (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000) along with recent research on how promotion and prevention orientations (Higgins, 1998) operate in different interpersonal contexts. We then turn to a long-standing program of research by Simpson, Rholes, and their colleagues that has tested a series of diathesis-stress predictions associated with attachment theory. Each of these programs of research has confirmed that certain types of situations elicit certain kinds of responses in people who possess certain dispositional strengths (e.g., high self-esteem, greater attachment security) or vulnerabilities (e.g., low self-esteem, greater attachment insecurity). Collectively, these programs of research indicate that one can neither predict nor understand how individuals think, feel, and behave without knowing the specific social situations that individuals are confronting and how they perceive and interpret each situation. We conclude the chapter by suggesting new directions in which interactional-based thinking might head, accentuating the promise of functional strategies for furthering our understanding person-by-situation effects (Snyder & Cantor, 1998).

Interational Perspectives in Psychology

Social and personality psychology have rather distinct historical origins (Jones, 1985), partly because each field began with different missions and goals. Social psychology started as an enterprise that sought to understand how factors external to individuals affect the way in which they think, feel, and behave. Gordon Allport (1968, p. 3), for example, defined social psychology as the "attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others." Personality psychology, on the other hand, wanted to determine how forces that reside within individuals guide their behavior over time and in different situations. Being both a social and a personality psychologist, Allport (1937, p. 48) also offered a foundational definition of personality, referring to it as "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his [sic] unique adjustments to his environment."

One feature that these two definitions share is what Lewin (1948) addressed in field theory—the principle forces that impel people to move through the life space. Social and personality psychology both address how and why individuals are motivated to think, feel, and behave in response to forces, with personality psychology placing emphasis on forces that reside within individuals (e.g., traits, needs, motives, desires), and with social psychology focusing on forces that lie outside a person but within their local environment (e.g., social norms and roles, situational pressures and expectations, other people). However, Lewin also believed that personality traits should affect what people attend to, perceive, interpret, remember, and react to in different social situations. Personality, in other words, should...
often play a role in determining the meaning and potential impact that certain situations have on individuals who possess certain traits or dispositions. This is why Lewin developed and used manipulation checks in studies; he understood that persons and situations were inextricably connected in more profound ways than many people assumed. Today, the premise that behavior is the result of characteristics of both the person and the situation is almost universally accepted (see Snyder & Cantor, 1998; Snyder & Ickes, 1985). This is especially true in the field of interpersonal relationships, where relationship partners are often the most prominent and important “feature” in the environments of most individuals. Moreover, the effects of some personality traits (e.g., agreeableness) are not witnessed unless individuals are in situational contexts that are relevant to the expression of their traits (e.g., those that allow agreeable people to cooperate with others).

Historically, three major strategies have been used to investigate how personality and social situations dovetail to guide how individuals think, feel, and behave: the dispositional strategy, the interactional strategy, and the situational strategy (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). The oldest strategy, the dispositional one, reveals how specific traits or dispositions impact how individuals think, feel, and behave both over time and in different social settings. This strategy was used in early research on trait constructs such as the authoritarian personality (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950), the need for social approval (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960), and Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970). One cardinal feature of the dispositional strategy is that it identifies individuals who regularly and consistently display certain social behaviors that presumably reflect the influence of the trait(s) being studied (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). Although the dispositional approach has generated many interesting and important findings (see Snyder & Ickes, 1985), it has distinct limitations. For example, the dispositional strategy tends to be atheoretical and, in some cases, tautological (e.g., evidence for possessing the trait of extraversion is sometimes inferred from the fact that certain people talk more than others). It also focuses heavily on whether and how certain dispositions impact how people think, feel, and behave to the relative neglect of important situational factors. For this reason, studies based solely on the dispositional strategy tend to explain relatively little variance in most social behaviors.

Realizing that most dispositional constructs, including virtually all personality traits (Mischel, 1968) and attitudes (Wicker, 1969), account for approximately 10% of the variance in most behaviors, psychologists returned to Lewin and began using what is now known as the interactional strategy. In addition to Lewin’s seminal writings, the seeds of the interactional strategy were evident in other early lines of work, including Murray’s (1938) model of needs and motives, Kelly’s (1955) theory of personal constructs, and Neisser’s (1967) cognitive research, which inspired the motivated cognition movement (Endler, 1982). Consistent with Lewin, each of these theorists claimed that dispositions should influence how people perceive and interpret the meaning of certain social situations, depending on their current needs and motivational states. This explains why the interactional strategy considers both dispositional and situational information when specifying when and why certain traits should or should not be moderated by (statistically interact with) certain types of situations, resulting in consistent and predictable context-dependent patterns of thought, feeling, and action.

Within the past two decades, a hybrid discipline of personality and social psychology has emerged in several subareas of both fields. For example, interactional strategies have been successfully applied to the study of prosocial behavior (e.g., Carlo, Eisenberg, Troyer, Switzer, & Spear, 1991); dominance, conformity, and dissent within groups (e.g., Maslach, Santee, & Wade, 1987); stress reactions (e.g., Davis & Matthews, 1996); intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (e.g., Thompson, Chaiken, & Hazelwood, 1993); alcohol use (e.g., Hull & Young, 1983); self-concept and social behavior (e.g., Brown & Smart, 1991); resistance to persuasion (e.g., Zuwerink & Devine, 1996); obedience to authority figures (e.g., Blass, 1991); perceptions of social support (e.g., Lakey, McCabe, Fisicaro, & Drew, 1996); and intimacy and self-disclosure (e.g., Schaffer, Ogden, & Wu, 1987). When dispositions and situations are both properly measured and modeled, up to 80% of the variance in behavior can be explained (Snyder & Cantor, 1998).

There are different types of moderating variables in the interactional strategy, two of which are particularly relevant to this chapter: (1) strong versus weak situations, and (2) precipitating versus non precipitating situations. Strong situations have clear and distinct norms, rules, or expectations that specify how individuals should behave in the situation (e.g., appropriate behavior at funerals, or when the national anthem is being played). These highly role governed situations reduce the influence that most
dispositions have on behavior, suppressing the effects of individual difference variables. Weak situations, in contrast, involve fewer rules, norms, or expectations regarding how one ought to behave in the situation (e.g., a party at a friend’s house, an initial encounter with a stranger in a waiting room). As a consequence, weak situations allow dispositions to exert greater influence on behavior because situational forces are ambiguous or largely absent. Person-by-situation interaction effects are, therefore, more likely to emerge when a disposition is relevant to the situation being investigated and when the situation is neither too strong nor too weak.

The second major moderating variable in the interational strategy is whether situations are precipitating or nonprecipitating. Precipitating situations shift the cause of a behavior to a particular disposition, which then alters, amplifies, or mutes how an individual responds to it. For example, certain classes of situations (e.g., a rowdy party) may lead certain individuals (e.g., extraverts) to act on their schemas (working models) associated with extraversion, leading them to think, feel, and behave in a more boisterous and lively manner. Precipitating situations, which are also known as “situational moderating variables,” operate when: (1) features of the situation are theoretically relevant to the disposition; (2) the situation makes the schema(s) underlying the disposition salient guides to behavior; and (3) the situation is not too strong and permits different types or degrees of responding, depending on whether an individual scores high, moderate, or low on the disposition.

The third major investigative approach is the situational strategy (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). This strategy attempts to explain consistencies and regularities in social behavior by examining how people with different dispositional tendencies select, alter, or manipulate the social situations that affect their daily lives. The situational strategy is actually a dynamic version of the interactional strategy, but one that considers the reciprocal nature of situations and dispositions (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). Thus, this strategy addresses not only how situations affect dispositions, but how dispositions shape the micro and macro environments in which people live. Within the study of relationships, the situational strategy has confirmed that individual differences associated with self-monitoring affect how high and low self-monitors choose friends as activity partners (Snyder, Gangestad, & Simpson, 1983) and evaluate prospective romantic partners (Snyder, Berscheid, & Glick, 1985). Other research has demonstrated that certain personality traits systematically affect the choice of long-term mates (Buss, 1984), which in turn affect long-term relationship outcomes (Casp & Herbener, 1990).

Major Interactional Theories

Given the compelling logic of interactional approaches, one might expect they would be found in many domains across psychology. While they have informed the study of several important topics in psychology (see above), interactional strategies are not as prevalent as one might anticipate. There are several reasons for this. To begin with, a considerable amount of research in social and personality psychology has not been grounded in broad theoretical frameworks that specify how and why certain situations should have precipitating effects on certain people. This problem has been compounded by the fact that, unlike personality traits, we still do not have a good taxonomy or understanding of the fundamental types of social situations that regularly influence individuals and their lives (for an important exception, see Kelley et al., 2003; see also Reis & Holmes, chapter 4, this volume). Fortunately, some major relationship-based theories have incorporated both person and situation variables, making the relationships field an exemplar of how the interactional approach can be applied to generate novel and important insights into person-by-situation effects. This has been facilitated by recent advances in data analytic methods (see Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006), which now allow researchers to design and test person-by-situation models much more easily than before. For example, the development of new repeated-measures techniques for diary studies now permits researchers to follow individuals across time as they (and potentially their partners) move through a range of different situations (e.g., Bolger & Romero-Canayas, 2007).

In this section, we highlight three major theories. We first discuss Mischel and Shoda’s (1995) CAPS model of dispositions in relation to situations. This general model is one of the most prominent and best exemplars of how person-by-situation approaches can be fruitfully adopted to expand our understanding of when, how, and why certain situations reveal patterning and consistency in social behavior among certain people. We then turn to two other major theories, both of which have deep interpersonal roots: interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). These theories offer more specific predictions about
how certain dispositions should interface with certain types of situations to generate unique patterns of thought, feeling, and action. As we shall see, relationship partners are very important and salient features of the individual’s “social environment” according to these theories. This, in turn, introduces some interesting complications in that: (1) each partner’s dispositions (e.g., traits, motives, needs, desires) become an important element of the other partner’s immediate situation/environment; (2) the dispositions of both partners must be taken into consideration; and (3) the beliefs that individuals have about their partner’s needs and dispositions may determine what happens, independent of whether or not these beliefs reflect the partner’s actual needs or dispositions.

17 The Cognitive-Affective Processing System (CAPS) Model

Traditional personality approaches have been based on the assumption that people’s dispositional characteristics remain stable across different situations and contexts. Research, however, has not always supported this assumption. People’s behavior in relation to nearly all traits varies considerably across contexts and situations (Mischel, 1968). To determine whether individual differences in behaviors are generated by transitory situational factors or by people’s enduring personality characteristics, researchers often statistically average trait-related behaviors across many situations. This averaging process reveals the extent to which people differ in their overall level of trait-related behavior, but it does not allow for situation-specific predictions, that is, for predictions that address when, where, and why patterns of behavior differ (Mischel, Shoda, & Mendoza-Denton, 2002). An average summary score for a person’s level of agreeableness, for example, might reveal that a highly agreeable person is more accommodating than other people across different contexts (e.g., when negotiating a business deal with a client, when negotiating vacation plans with his/her spouse). However, it does not identify important exceptions to this person’s global action tendencies, such as situations in which he/she responds in less obliging or more confrontational ways (e.g., during specific types of conflict with a romantic partner, during difficult negotiations with specific people).

To generate predictions that move beyond understanding overall average differences in behavior, Mischel and Shoda (1995) proposed the cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) model (see also Mendoza-Denton & Ayduk, chapter 18, this volume). Instead of treating situational variability as noise that conceals the true stability and consistency of personality across situations, the CAPS model assumes that intrapersonal variability of behavior across situations and different contexts may reflect an enduring yet dynamic personality system, one that incorporates rather than ignores the impact of situations (see also Cervone, 2004).

The CAPS model focuses on situations as they are perceived and understood by individuals (cf. Kelly, 1955), and it attempts explain why situations exert different effects on different people. The model proposes that people have mental representations, or cognitive-affective units (CAUs), that exist within a large network of associations and constraints known as CAPS networks. CAUs form the stable units of personality and contain people’s construals, goals, expectations, beliefs, and emotions with respect to situations, others, and the self. They also contain self-regulatory standards, competencies, plans, and strategies (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Once activated (or inhibited), CAUs guide how people interpret or construe an encountered situation or person, and they automatically activate cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to that situation or person. Each individual has a relatively stable activation network among the units within the system, reflecting his/her social (e.g., early caregiving experiences, culture) and biological (e.g., temperament, genes) history and background.

One key assumption of the CAPS model is that mental representations have conditional qualities—

"if . . . then properties," such as if I encounter X . . . then I will do Y. According to Mischel (1999), every person has a unique if . . . then . . . profile, which constitutes his/her behavioral signature. Empirical evidence supports this premise. Shoda, Mischel, and Wright (1994), for example, observed children’s behavior in various naturalistic situations and found that children’s if . . . then . . . profiles were distinct and stable across time. Moreover, Chen (2003) has shown that the more familiar individuals are with someone, the more others are thought of in conditional terms. People also think conditionally about themselves. If a person identifies a situation that is linked to one of his/her behaviors in an “if . . . then . . .” manner, the behavior is more likely to occur. For example, a highly anxious person who perceives his/her partner’s fishing trip with friends as abandonment or neglect is more likely to display clingy or angry behaviors.

SIMPSON, WINTERHELD 497
The CAPS model, therefore, suggests a reconceptualization of personality traits as specific if...then... behavioral profiles, which specify what a given individual will do in specific situations. According to the model, individual differences can emerge in two ways. First, people differ in the accessibility of their schemas and the situational cues that activate their schemas. In a given situation, different schemas should become activated for different people, leading them to perceive different aspects of the same situation or to interpret the same situation in different ways. For example, a partner’s “ambiguous” comment about one’s appearance before a formal event might be construed as rejection by one individual, but as a neutral comment by another individual. Different schemas can also become activated for different individuals when meeting a particular person. For instance, when individuals encounter new people who resemble significant others from the past that activate schemas of them, these schemas tend to evoke if...then... profiles that lead individuals to respond to new people as they would with prior significant others (e.g., parents; Andersen & Chen, 2002). Second, the pattern of linkages and strength of associations between situations and behaviors that have been established over time should differ from one person to another. Even if two people share the same view of a given situation (e.g., interpreting a partner’s ambiguous remark as rejection), their behavioral responses might differ considerably. One person, for instance, might respond with anger or hostility, whereas the other might react with silence or withdrawal. To predict behavior, therefore, researchers must determine: (1) how a person construes the situation (which is influenced by his/her schemas and their degree of accessibility), and (2) the person’s specific situation-behavior linkage (i.e., his/her if...then... profile) (Shoda et al., 1994).

In general, the CAPS model emphasizes regularities in within-person cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses in particular contexts. The assumption that different cognitive-affective representations can be activated in different situations allows for the existence of seemingly contradictory traits in the same person (Fleeson, 2001, 2004). For example, fearful-avoidant individuals (who have negative views of themselves and others) might display dismissive behavioral tendencies in one situation, but anxious-ambivalent qualities (e.g., clingy behavior or neediness) in another situation. In addition, identifying certain if...then... profiles allows researchers to capture important exceptions to people’s global behavioral tendencies and to pinpoint which situations typically elicit or inhibit trait-relevant behaviors. For example, given their negative expectations regarding the responsiveness of others, people who score high on attachment avoidance should be reluctant to enter certain social situations. Consistent with the CAPS perspective, Beck and Clark (2009) have found that avoidant persons tend to sidestep social situations that provide information about others’ evaluations of them (i.e., socially diagnostic situations), but enjoy socializing with others in nondiagnostic social situations that do not provide information about whether others like them. In addition, Zaki, Bolger, and Ochsner (2008) have documented that trait affective empathy (individuals’ tendency to experience others’ emotions) predicts empathic accuracy (individuals’ tendency to accurately assess others’ emotions), but only in certain interpersonal situations (when others express these emotions clearly).

Given that each partner constitutes a significant part of the other person’s immediate situation or environment in most close relationships, the CAPS model can also be applied to dyadic contexts. To the extent that a person’s “situation” consists largely of his/her partner’s behavior, the interpretation and psychological experience of the situation (i.e., the partner’s behavior) should be influenced by the individual’s CAPS network, which in turn should influence his/her behavioral response to the partner. The partner then interprets and experiences this response through his/her own CAPS network, from which another behavioral response flows. The behavior of an individual, therefore, emerges from the interaction between the individual and his/her situation, which consists primarily of the behavior displayed by his/her partner.

Zayas, Shoda, and Ayduk (2002) have adapted Lewin’s famous equation to close relationship contexts. The behavior of one partner (B₁) emerges from the interaction between his/her dispositional characteristics (P₁) and the situational input (i.e., his/her partner’s behavior, B₂), such that B₁ = f(P₁, B₂). The behavior of the second partner can be conceptualized similarly: B₂ = f(P₂, B₁). Hence, if an individual’s immediate environment consists mainly of his/her partner’s behavior, E₁, becomes a function of the individual’s own behavior (B₁) and his/her partner’s characteristics (P₁). The partner then interprets and responds (B₂) to the individual’s initial behavior, so that E₂ = f(P₂, B₁) and E₂ = f(P₂, B₁).

As partners interact across time, the “interlocking” of their respective CAPS systems should create a...
dyadic system, within which the dispositional character-
istics of each individual are embedded and
from which each individual’s behaviors, as well as
the unique behavioral patterns of the dyad, gradu-
ally emerge (Zayas et al., 2002). As partners interact
more often and spend more time together, attention
to and encoding of the partner’s behavior increases.
For this reason, the situational input for one’s own
behavior increases in psychological significance over
time, leading to stable and predictable interaction
signatures of relationships. If, for instance, an indi-
vidual’s partner consistently criticizes him/her for
having a drink with dinner, this might repeatedly
activate a specific subset of the individual’s CAPS
network (“If I have a drink . . . then X criticizes me),
triggering a particular response such as defensive-
ness. Over time, the thoughts and emotions in the
individual’s CAPS network related to this particular
situation will become more accessible, and the
behavior (defensiveness) might be triggered by min-
imal input on part of the partner (e.g., even a
“glance” by the partner when one has a drink elicits
defensiveness).

People’s dispositional characteristics also predis-
pose them to select, evoke, or manipulate certain
situations (Buss, 1987), including the partner and
his/her behavior. This, in turn, may amplify or sus-
tain these dispositional characteristics. For example,
if an individual’s behavior is consistent over time
(e.g., s/he always withdraws during relationship
conflicts), the individual’s partner will be repeatedly
exposed to situations that activate the same thoughts
and emotions within his/her relevant CAUs (e.g.,
“If there is conflict, then he/she pulls away and we
grow apart”). This, in turn, should generate specific
behavioral responses in the partner (e.g., approach
behavior to try to reestablish intimacy). This behav-
ioral response may then serve as a situational trigger
for the other person, who is likely to experience his/her
partner’s approach behavior as threatening,
resulting in even more withdrawal, thereby perpetu-
ating or exacerbating the cycle. Because the patterns
and associations among cognitions and affects
within CAPS networks also reflect the impact of
individuals’ social and genetic backgrounds, the
CAPS model is consistent with interpersonal theo-
ries such as attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973,
1980) and interdependence theory (Kelley &

In sum, the CAPS model is a broad person-
by-situation framework that explains how situations
may interact with personality traits or individual
differences to improve our ability to predict and
understand certain trait-behavior linkages. According
to the CAPS model, personality reflects stable pat-
terns of behavior that result from certain trait-situ-
pairings and are activated in certain situations.
One limitation of the CAPS model is that it does
not explain why, from an ontogenetic standpoint,
certain situations should come to trigger certain
patterns of thoughts, feelings, or behaviors in cer-
tain people. Other theories are needed to explain
when, how, and why certain situations should
elicit the cardinal personality signatures of people
who have certain traits. This is where major inter-
personal theories such as interdependence theory
and attachment theory make important contribu-
tions to our understanding of person-by-situation
effects.

Interdependence Theory

Interdependence theory, which was developed by
two of Lewin’s students (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959;
Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), is one of the major theo-
ries within social psychology that directly addresses
how people and their environments interact, result-
ing in specific behavioral decisions. According to
interdependence theory, when two people decide
what to do in a given situation, their choices should
depend on: (1) the type of situation the partners are
in, and (2) each partner’s needs, motives, and/or dis-
positions in relation to the other. The specific type
of situation that two people find themselves in
should affect how they are dependent on each other
and how they can thus influence each other’s out-
comes in the situation (i.e., their degree of interde-
pendence). The interpersonal dispositions/orientations
of each partner (e.g., each partner’s interpersonally
relevant traits, motives, values, attitudes, and beliefs)
should also guide how each partner perceives, inter-
prets, and makes decisions about what to do in the
situation. In other words, the dispositions of each
partner should be “functionally relevant” to how
each partner thinks, feels, and acts, depending on
the features of the situation at hand (Holmes, 2002).

One of the main obstacles to studying persons
and situations has been identifying the fundamental
dimensions on which social situations differ (see
also Reis & Holmes, chapter 4, this volume). In
fact, one of the primary limitations of Mischel and
Shoda’s (1995) CAPS model is that it does not pro-
vide a “theory of situations” capable of specifying
why certain personality traits are activated by expo-
sure to certain situations (Holmes, 2002). On the
person side, we have a fairly good taxonomy of the

SIMPSON, WINTERHELD
major personality traits (e.g., the Big Five) and several basic interpersonal orientations (e.g., attachment styles, self-esteem). On the situation side, however, a solid taxonomy of situations remains elusive, partly because there are a multitude of possible situations that differ on myriad dimensions. Kelley et al. (2003) have recently used interdependence theory to identify approximately 20 “prototypical situations” that have unique outcome patterns and distinct qualities. Some of these prototypical situations (e.g., those involving principles of exchange, investment, threat, trust) should be systematically associated with important relationship processes and outcomes, and they are encountered on a regular basis.

Figure 20.1 depicts one common relationship-relevant situation known as “exchange with mutual profit” (see Holmes, 2002). The values in each cell reflect each person’s (each partner’s) level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each behavioral choice, with each partner having two options from which to choose. In the hypothetical example shown in Figure 20.1, if both partners select option 1 (both decide to clean the house), each partner benefits by 10 points because the house gets cleaned while the couple enjoys spending time together. This cooperative choice entails a reciprocal exchange in which each partner shares equally in the largest total benefits in any of the four cells (i.e., the partners share 20 points). One or both partners may, however, be drawn to option 2 (not cleaning the house), which would yield 5 additional points (15) if the other partner chooses option 1 (cleans the house by himself/herself) and, in doing so, receives no benefits (or perceives costs if s/he feels treated unfairly). This “exchange” situation pits motives to cooperate against motivates to maximize personal gains, and it is one of a handful of fundamental relationship-relevant situations (see Kelley et al., 2003, for other situations).

Each of the 20 fundamental situations identified by Kelley et al. (2003) varies on six situation dimensions (Holmes, 2002). As shown in Table 20.1, the first situation dimension is the degree of interdependence, which is indexed by the extent to which each partner can influence the quality (goodness) of his or her partner’s outcomes in the situation. The greater the potential for influence, the more interdependent partners are in that situation. Relationships in which partners are more interdependent over many different situations tend to be closer because partners have stronger and more frequent impact on each other across different life domains (Kelley et al., 1983). The second dimension is the mutuality of dependence, which reflects the degree to which partners have equal versus unequal power over each other in the situation. Greater mutuality of dependence reflects more equal power in the situation, whereas less mutuality signifies more unequal power.

The third dimension, correspondence of outcomes, represents the extent to which each partner has similar versus conflicting initial interests in the situation before any negotiation occurs. More correspondent situations are easier to resolve because the initial behavioral choice that is best for one partner is also likely to be best for the other partner, with little if any need for compromise. The fourth dimension, the basis of control, reflects the degree to which partners can control each other’s outcomes in the situation by using exchange principles (e.g., by making promises or threats) or coordinating their activities (e.g., when one partner begins dinner, and the other performs the next logical steps). The fifth dimension, the temporal structure of decision-making, reflects how soon decisions will have consequences for one or both partners once a decision has been made. Some decisions have immediate consequences (e.g., deciding to have life-altering surgery), whereas the full effects of others take years to unfold (e.g., deciding to have children). The sixth dimension, the degree of uncertainty, represents the extent to which partners are uncertain about the long-term outcomes of a decision due to incomplete information or lack of knowledge. In more uncertain situations, for example, partners cannot predict whether their current decisions will or will not result in the outcomes they anticipated or hoped for.

Each of the six situation dimensions listed in Table 20.1 has a “function of rule,” and each one is relevant to a particular set of interpersonal dispositions.
For example, in situations that differ in the degree of interdependence, the functional (i.e., operative) decision rule is whether to increase or decrease dependence on the partner. Which decision is made should depend on the degree to which one or both partners are dispositionally inclined to avoid interdependence (as is true of avoidantly attached people) or to embrace it (as is true of securely attached people). In situations that differ in mutuality of interdependence, the functional rule is to promote either prosocial or self-interested goals. Which decision is made should depend on the degree to which one or both partners have a cooperative versus competitive orientation or a responsive versus unresponsive orientation toward other people, especially the partner. In situations that differ in correspondence of outcomes, the functional rule centers on expectations of the partner’s goals or what the partner wants to achieve. Thus, decisions should hinge on the degree to which individuals are concerned about whether their partners are sufficiently responsive to them and/or how much confidence or trust they can place in their partners.

In situations that differ in the basis of control, the functional rule involves whether control of the partner’s outcomes occurs through exchange or coordination tactics. Which decision is made should depend on the degree to which one or both partners are dominant versus submissive or assertive versus passive. In situations that differ in temporal structure, the functional rule is to facilitate either immediate or distant goal-striving. The decision followed should hinge on the degree to which one or both partners are dependable versus unreliable or loyal versus uncommitted to each other. Finally, in situations that vary in degree of uncertainty, the functional rule is how to deal with incomplete information or unknown future events. The decision that is made should depend on the degree to which one or both partners have a high need for certainty, is open to new experiences, or is optimistic about future events.

In sum, for each of the six situation dimensions, specific interpersonal dispositions, including interpersonally relevant personality traits and relationship orientations, should become salient and guide how people construe certain situations and how they make decisions when in them. Put another way, situations differ in the extent to which they are “relevant” to certain dispositions and are likely to elicit their expression (Holmes, 2002). People who prefer autonomy and emotional independence in relationships, for instance, should dislike or feel uncomfortable in situations that pull for greater interdependence. Such situations should activate the relationship-relevant schemas and working models of these individuals, which should in turn motivate them to behave in ways that decrease their dependence on their partners, especially in situations that might foster greater interdependence. Preferences for autonomy and emotional independence, however, should not become activated and guide thoughts, feelings, and behavior in other situations.

Table 20.1 Dimensions of Situations and Interpersonal Dispositions (reprinted with permission from Holmes, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of Situation</th>
<th>Function of Rule</th>
<th>Interpersonal Disposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Degree of interdependence</td>
<td>Increase or decrease dependence on partner</td>
<td>Avoidance of interdependence/Comfort with dependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mutuality of interdependence</td>
<td>Promote prosocial or self-interested goals</td>
<td>Cooperative/competitive Responsive/unresponsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Correspondence of outcomes</td>
<td>Expectations about partner’s goals</td>
<td>Anxiety about responsiveness/Confidence or trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Basis of control</td>
<td>Control through Exchange (promise/threat)</td>
<td>Dominant/submissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Temporal structure</td>
<td>Promote immediate or distant goal striving</td>
<td>Dependable/unreliable Loyal/uncommitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Degree of uncertainty</td>
<td>Cope with incomplete information or uncertain future</td>
<td>Need for certainty/openness Optimism/pessimism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Attachment Theory**

Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) began formulating attachment theory after observing the deleterious effects that long-term caregiver/child separations had on the emotional and physical well-being of children. He conjectured that the need to form attachment bonds with primary caregivers is an innate, biologically based tendency that was selected during evolutionary history because it increased the probability of surviving the many perils of childhood. Indeed, the tendency to seek physical and psychological proximity to attachment figures (e.g., primary caregivers, romantic partners) is one of the central tenets of attachment theory. According to Bowlby (1969, 1973), virtually all children and adults are motivated to seek some form of contact with their attachment figures, especially when they are distressed, threatened, or feel overwhelmed (Kobak & Duemmler, 1994).

The earliest attachment research focused on relationships between young children and their mothers. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) identified three types of infant/caregiver relationships: secure, avoidant, and anxious-resistant. When upset, children who have a secure relationship with their mothers glean comfort from her presence and actively use her to regulate and reduce negative affect when it arises. Avoidant children, by comparison, do not express their needs for proximity to their mothers by directly seeking contact when they become distressed. Rather, avoidant children turn away from their mothers to regulate and dissipate negative affect and utilize other coping strategies (e.g., distraction). Avoidant behavior may be an evolved strategy to suppress emotions, needs, or actions that are unwanted, dysfunctional, or were associated with painful rejections from past attachment figures. It also allows children (and perhaps adults) to not put excessive demands on their attachment figures, who may be unwilling or unable to invest more in the relationship and might otherwise terminate it (Main, 1981).

Children who have anxious-resistant attachment relationships also do not use their mothers as a source of comfort when they are distressed. Instead of avoiding their caregivers, however, anxious children cling to their mothers, remain distressed even after establishing contact with them, and do not resume normal activities such as exploration. These behaviors suggest that anxious children are hypersensitive to separations from their caregivers, despite the fact that they do not seem to receive sufficient "felt security" from them. Anxious behavior could reflect an evolved strategy designed to express emotions, needs, or actions intensely in order to attract and retain the attention of inconsistent, poorly motivated, or inattentive caregivers (Main, 1981).

As individuals grow and develop, relationship experiences become encoded in working models (schemas), which explain much of the continuity and stability witnessed in personality and social behavior across development (Bowlby, 1973). Working models are cognitive structures that encompass an individual’s cumulative experiences in and perceptions of earlier attachment relationships (Collins, Guichard, Ford, & Feeney, 2004). They contain episodic, semantic, and affective information about prior relationships and interpersonal events including: (1) rules about the emotions and thoughts one has about relationship partners; (2) guidelines for how to interpret and regulate emotional experiences in relationships; (3) beliefs and values about relationships and relationship-based experiences; (4) expectations about what future relationships and relationship experiences ought to be like; and (5) memories and emotions linked to past relationships. Working models guide behavior and affective experiences in relationships, and they provide a cognitive/emotional context through which new relationship information is filtered, interpreted, and usually assimilated.

Conceptually analogous attachment patterns and corresponding behaviors have also been documented in adults (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007a; also chapter 19, this volume). In adults, attachment patterns (known as “attachment styles”) exist within a 2-dimensional space defined by the continuously distributed, relatively orthogonal dimensions of attachment anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Simpson, Rhodes, & Phillips, 1996). Within this framework, greater attachment security is indicated by lower scores on both the anxiety and avoidance dimensions. Individuals who score high on attachment anxiety worry about losing their partners, yearn to achieve greater felt security, and are hypervigilant to signs that their partners could be pulling away from them (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Those who score high on attachment avoidance worry about losing their independence and autonomy, yearn to maintain control in their relationships, and use deactivating strategies when dealing with threatening events. As Kobak and Sceery (1988) have discussed, highly secure persons openly acknowledge distress when it arises and turn to significant others for comfort and emotional support to dissipate negative affect. Highly avoidant
people are less inclined to acknowledge distress and prefer to manage negative affect by defensively withdrawing from others. Highly anxious individuals focus on their distress, ruminate about worst-case scenarios, and are hypervigilant to cues that their attachment figures might abandon them. Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) have translated these ideas into a process model that explains how certain types of threatening events activate the working models and coping strategies associated with each attachment style.

One of the most central and unique principles of attachment theory is that the attachment system should reestablish felt security when individuals, either children or adults, feel threatened or distressed (Bowlby, 1973; Simpson & Rholes, 1994). Felt insecurity is a state of strong, unpleasant arousal in which individuals are upset and need comfort or support, preferably from their attachment figures (Sroufe & Waters, 1977). Bowlby (1969, 1988) believed that the attachment system should be most strongly activated when individuals are distressed (for experimental evidence, see Mikulincer, Gillath, & Shaver, 2002; Mikulincer & Shaver, chapter 19, this volume). The primary activating conditions can be partitioned into personal factors (e.g., hunger, pain, fatigue, or illness), environmental factors (e.g., frightening, dangerous, or overly challenging events), and relationship factors (e.g., relationship conflict, the prolonged absence of the attachment figure, discouragement of proximity by the attachment figure).

Each of these threatening events has the potential to activate components of the attachment system, such as heightening the accessibility of working models and evoking specific behaviors designed to mitigate distress and negative affect (Simpson & Rholes, 1994). Thus, the most prototypic emotional and behavioral features of secure, anxious, and avoidant people should be observed when they are in specific situations that trigger their working models, which contain their most important attachment-relevant concerns, worries, and goals. Highly anxious people, for example, should be most likely to display hypervigilance (e.g., closely monitoring the whereabouts of their partners, constantly ruminating about “worst-case” scenarios involving their partners or relationships) in situations that call into question the commitment of their partners or make the instability of their relationships salient. Unless these situations pose extreme or clear threats to relationships (Simpson & Rholes, 1994), they should not activate the working models of secure or avoidant people, neither of whom worries about relationship loss or abandonment.

In summary, attachment theory is a person-by-situation theoretical framework (Bowlby, 1973; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Simpson & Rholes, 1994). It suggests that the prototypical features of attachment security, avoidance, and anxiety should be most apparent when highly secure, avoidant, or anxious individuals are in situations that activate their working models. Their working models should then guide what secure, avoidant, and anxious persons do and do not attend to in the situation and how they process and interpret social information within it en route to deciding how to behave. We will present several empirical examples of specific person-by-situation attachment effects in the next section of the chapter.

**Interactional Programs of Research in Relationship Science**

In this section, we provide a selective yet representative review of key empirical findings in the field of close relationships, all of which have been informed by person-by-situation (interactional) models. We highlight a few sustained programs of research that have investigated how stable individual differences (e.g., self-esteem, personality traits, attachment styles) interact with certain situations (e.g., different types of threatening versus nonthreatening situations) to generate specific outcomes hypothesized by major theoretical models. Research that does not contain each of these features is not reviewed.

We begin by describing a series of studies that have tested predictions derived from the dependency/risk regulation model (Murray et al., 2000; Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). The majority of these studies have examined how individuals with high versus low self-esteem react to certain kinds of threats and challenges posed to their romantic partners/relationships. Following this, we discuss recent work extending core tenets of regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998) to relationships. We then turn to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980), showcasing a program of research that has examined how and why individuals who are anxiously, avoidantly, or securely attached think, feel, and behave toward their romantic partners when faced with different types of stressors.

**Dependency/Risk Regulation and Self-Esteem**

Several studies have illustrated the value of using person-by-situation approaches to increase our understanding of important interpersonal dynamics. The long-standing program of work by Murray,
Holmes, and their colleagues on self-esteem and dependency/risk regulation (Murray et al., 2000; Murray et al., 2006), for example, has shown how situating personality processes within a dyadic context can elucidate the mechanisms that tie certain dispositions to important relationship functioning and outcomes.

Low self-esteem is a psychological vulnerability, placing these individuals at risk for a variety of negative outcomes such as loneliness, life dissatisfaction, depression, and hopelessness (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Cutrona, 1982). In close relationships, individuals with chronically low self-esteem tend to perceive their partners less positively than high self-esteem individuals (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996a), and their perceptions often become more negative over time (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996b). In addition, low self-esteem individuals tend to be involved in less satisfying marital relationships (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993) and dating relationships (Murray et al., 1996a).

Murray, Holmes, and their colleagues have developed a model that elucidates why low self-esteem frequently results in less satisfying relationships. According to their dependency/risk regulation model, individuals who differ on self-esteem interpret situations that involve interpersonal vulnerability and dependency very differently. Compared to high self-esteem individuals, those with low self-esteem have less positive and more uncertain views of themselves (Baumeister, 1993; Campbell, 1990). Moreover, they tend to believe that their partner's positive regard for and acceptance of them is conditional—that is, it is contingent on certain attributes or conditions (e.g., "I will love you if you . . ."); Baldwin & Sinclair, 1996). High self-esteem people, in contrast, assume that their partner's regard and acceptance is largely unconditional.

According to Murray et al. (2000), people use these different self-views to construe how their partners view them. Low self-esteem individuals often assume that their partners see them just as negatively as they see themselves, whereas high self-esteem people presume that their partners see the positive qualities in them that they believe they actually possess. These different reflected appraisals should become more pronounced in situations that signal possible rejection, make one feel vulnerable, or engender self-doubt. Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, and Ellsworth (1998), for example, made people doubt their intellectual abilities experimentally. Individuals low in self-esteem responded to this situation with increased worries about their partner's positive regard and acceptance. But when self-doubts were induced in high self-esteem individuals, they perceived their partner's regard and acceptance were even stronger, reflecting their sustained belief in the unconditional nature of their partner's regard. Moreover, in daily diary studies, low self-esteem individuals are more likely to interpret ambiguous signs such as their partner's bad mood on a given day as evidence that they are not positively regarded by their partner (Murray et al., 2006). These findings are consistent with Mischel and Shoda's (1995) CAPS model, which suggests that different schemas get activated for different people in certain situations, leading individuals to focus on different aspects of the same situation or to interpret the same situation differently.

Murray et al. (2000) also suggest that reflected appraisals of the partner's regard should be experienced as a sense of felt security. Although most people regulate closeness and dependence in newly formed relationships in a self-protective manner (i.e., they delay commitment or avoid risking vulnerability until they are fairly sure their partners will reciprocate regard and affection; Bowlby, 1980; Kelley, 1983), regulation processes should take different courses for people who differ in self-esteem. Low self-esteem individuals should feel less secure about their partner's regard, which should permit them to use the relationship as a source of further self-affirmation. Thus, consistent with the CAPS model, individuals with high versus low self-esteem should display different patterns of linkages between situations and behaviors, predisposing them to think, feel, and behave in different ways, especially when they are in situations that make them feel vulnerable.

The partner's regard can be construed as an "affordance" on which high self-esteem individuals capitalize. The belief that their partners view them as positively as they view themselves should help high self-esteem people feel self-affirmed and even more secure about their partner's unconditional regard. This, in turn, should have important implications for how high self-esteem individuals interact with their partners. For example, they should (and
do) perceive their partners more positively, behave more constructively, and thus experience greater relationship well-being over time (Murray et al., 2000). Low self-esteem persons should be less likely to detect potential affordances. In fact, their often incorrect belief that their partners perceive them negatively leads low self-esteem people to devalue their relationships, behave in destructive ways (e.g., seek excessive reassurance, act needy), and distance themselves psychologically from their partners to avert the rejection they anticipate (Murray et al., 2006). In so doing, low self-esteem people create the unfortunate reality that they fear.

In conclusion, the dependency/risk regulation model is an excellent example of how theory and research relevant to a major individual difference variable—self-esteem—can be fruitfully used to generate and test novel predictions about how certain people should react to situations that pose threats to the self or the current relationship. The predictions and findings that flow from this important line of research are consistent with the CAPS model.

Regulatory Focus and Close Relationships
Building on earlier distinctions between the needs for nurturance and security (e.g., Bowlby, 1969), regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997; 1998) identifies two motivational systems: (1) promotion focus, which facilitates the fulfillment of people’s nurturance needs through the pursuit of hopes and aspirations and is concerned with personal growth and advancement, and (2) prevention focus, which allows people to achieve security needs through the fulfillment of duties and obligations and is concerned with safety and protection. When pursuing promotion concerns, people are in a state of eagerness. They strive toward the presence of rewarding outcomes (i.e., gains), and seek to avert the absence of positive outcomes (i.e., nongains, or missed opportunities and unrealized aspirations). When they are prevention-focused, people use vigilance strategies to avert the presence of negative outcomes (i.e., losses) and strive toward the absence of negative outcomes (i.e., nonlosses, or absence of threats).

Both regulatory focus systems exist in all people to some degree. A particular regulatory focus can be activated momentarily by situations that convey gain/reward-related information or loss/threat-related information (Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998). Stable individual differences in regulatory focus are believed to develop, at least in part, from socialization experiences with significant others, especially parenting practices that encourage promotion or prevention concerns (Higgins & Silberman, 1998; Manian, Papadakis,Strauman, & Essex, 2006).

A large literature has documented the cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations of regulatory focus, both when measured as chronic dispositions and when activated temporarily in experiments (see Molden, Lee, & Higgins, 2008). Consistent with their concerns for growth and advancement, strongly promotion-focused people are more likely to attend to and recall events that signal the presence or absence of positive outcomes (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Higgins & Tylkocinski, 1992). Such people also experience positive outcomes more intensely and with more cheerfulness, and they experience negative outcomes less intensely and with greater rejection (Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000). Consistent with their concerns for safety and security, strongly prevention-focused people are more likely to attend to and recall events involving the presence and absence of negative outcomes (Higgins et al., 1994; Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992). Moreover, they experience negative outcomes more intensely and with more agitation, and positive outcomes less intensely and with greater quiescence-related emotions (Idson et al., 2000).

It is important to emphasize that both regulatory foci are concerned with attaining positive end-states (i.e., prevention focus with security/safety, and promotion focus with growth/nurturance). In addition, both promotion-focused and prevention-focused people approach positive outcomes or avoid negative ones to reach these desired end-states (Higgins, 1997). Promotion and prevention orientations, therefore, are not identical to the approach system (which is concerned exclusively with approaching positive outcomes) and the avoidance system (which is concerned exclusively with avoiding negative outcomes; see Gable, 2006, and Gable & Berkman, 2008). Rather, regulatory focus theory specifies different ways in which promotion-focused and prevention-focused people typically approach and experience positive outcomes and avoid and experience negative outcomes. Thus, both regulatory focus systems should affect perceptual sensitivities, emotional reactivity, and behavioral responses to positive and negative relational events. People’s salient needs for growth or security in relationships should prompt them to perceive and respond to social events in ways that help them meet their specific relationship-relevant goals and needs. In so doing,
promotion focus and prevention focus should shape relationship outcomes in different ways. In a relationship context, for example, strongly promotion-focused people might strive to keep the relationship lively and growth-oriented (e.g., through surprises, stimulating conversations, suggesting novel activities) and guard against boredom or lack of relationship growth. Highly prevention-focused people, who harbor strong needs for security, might avoid behaviors or situations that could escalate conflict or produce declines in intimacy.

Researchers have just begun to examine the consequences of regulatory focus in interpersonal contexts, most notably within groups (Levine, Higgins, & Choi, 2000) and between groups (Sassenberg, Kessler, & Mummendey, 2003; Shah, Brazy, & Higgins, 2004). Moving into personal relationships, Camacho, Higgins, and Luger (2003) have documented that regulatory focus predicts how people evaluate recalled conflict resolutions with their parents. Shah (2003) has found that the degree to which individuals believe their fathers have a particular regulatory focus regarding a task that they are about to perform in the lab (i.e., the extent to which they believe that their father hopes they will pursue the task goal versus considers it their duty/obligation to do so) implicitly affects the regulatory focus they adopt while doing the lab task as well as their emotional response to manipulated performance feedback. Examining consequences of regulatory focus in romantic relationships, Ayduk, May, Downey, and Higgins (2003) showed that having strong prevention concerns influences the evaluative and behavioral tactics that highly rejection-sensitive people use when coping with rejection. Individuals who were both highly rejection-sensitive and highly prevention-focused evaluated a potential dating partner less positively when they believed that the partner had rejected them. These individuals also reported greater withdrawal hostility during and after conflicts (e.g., acting cold and distant), and less expressive hostility (e.g., yelling) during conflicts with their romantic partners. Winterheld and Simpson (2010) found that individuals who are more prevention-focused perceived more unsupportive (distancing) behaviors from their partners during a conflict resolution discussion with their partners. They also tried to resolve the conflict by focusing more narrowly on the circumstances that contributed to it rather than on ways to move beyond the conflict. More promotion-focused individuals, in contrast, perceived more supportive behaviors from their partners during the conflict discussion and displayed more creative problem-solving when trying to settle the conflict. Suggesting that promotion and prevention concerns vary in importance across relationship stages, Molden, Lucas, Finkel, Kumashiro, and Rusbult (2009) found that perceived support for promotion-focused goals (but not prevention-focused goals) independently predicted personal and relationship well-being in unmarried partners (i.e., during relationship stages when needs for growth and advancement tend to dominate). Among married couples, however, perceived support for both types of goals predicted well-being, suggesting that in more established relationships needs for security and growth are both important.

Regulatory focus theory is also a generative framework from which to view individual differences and person-by-situation interactions at the level of the dyad. Because the situations that individuals encounter in many relationship contexts might be largely defined by who their romantic partner is and what s/he does, the regulatory focus of an individual's partner ought to also predict how an individual thinks, feels, or behaves. Winterheld (2008), for example, had couples engage in supportive discussions during which partners took turns disclosing an issue of personal importance to them. Individuals provided more positive and less negative (e.g., less intrusive) support to partners who were more promotion-focused. In contrast, individuals provided more negative and less positive support to more prevention-focused partners. Thus, people's regulatory focus orientations affect not only their own experiences, but their partner's experiences as well.

In sum, regulatory focus theory is another promising theoretical framework for understanding processes and outcomes in relationship contexts. The theory specifies the antecedent conditions that should activate each regulatory system, and it anticipates the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses that ought to flow from each system. In so doing, the theory allows researchers to investigate individual differences in people's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses that are consistent across social interactions with different interaction partners. A regulatory focus approach may also enable researchers to identify relationship-relevant situations or the psychological features of such situations (e.g., specific partner behaviors) to which people respond in specific, regulatory-goal congruent ways that minimize negative outcomes (non-gains or losses) or maximize positive outcomes (gains or nonlosses).
**Diathesis-Stress and Attachment Styles**

According to attachment theory, specific types of situations should activate certain working models, depending on an individual’s attachment history. Bowlby (1973, 1988) hypothesized that diathesis-stress effects should emerge in certain stressful interpersonal contexts, with greater attachment insecurity often acting as the diathesis (the personal vulnerability) and with stress being indexed by how an individual responds to a potentially taxing situation (e.g., feeling afraid, ill, or fatigued, experiencing relationship conflict) or a difficult life event (e.g., having a baby, experiencing a major relationship breakup or loss). Greater attachment security, on the other hand, should buffer people from all but the most extreme of stressful events (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). Securely attached people have positive and benevolent working models of themselves and others, and they typically utilize constructive, problem-focused coping strategies when they become distressed. These assets should serve as an “inner resource” (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007b; also chapter 19, this volume), permitting highly secure people to take advantage of the attributes and resources that other people—especially their attachment figures—are able and willing to offer.

How an individual reacts to a specific life stressor should depend on his or her relationship history, which presumably has shaped his/her working models. As discussed earlier, highly anxious individuals have received inconsistent or unpredictable care from past attachment figures, especially when they were upset and needed comforting (Cassidy & Berlin, 1994). Given these experiences, anxious individuals worry about losing their attachment figures in adulthood, crave more felt security, and are vigilant to detecting even trivial signs that their partners might be pulling away from them (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). They should, therefore, be bothered by—and their working models should become activated in—situations that threaten or call into question the quality, stability, or permanence of their primary relationships. Accordingly, stressful situations that center on relationship issues (e.g., unresolved relationship conflicts, the long-term absence of partners, discouragement of closeness by partners) should elicit the relational signatures—the prototypical emotional, cognitive, and behavioral tendencies—that define attachment anxiety.

Highly avoidant individuals have been rejected and rebuffed by prior attachment figures, especially when they were distressed and needed support (Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989). As a consequence, they have learned to be independent and self-reliant, which explains why they strive to retain autonomy and control in relationships. One way to achieve these goals is to avoid or exit situations that might require engaging in activities that could undermine their independence, autonomy, or control in relationships. Giving or receiving emotional forms of care and support ought to be one such situation (Bowlby, 1973). Highly avoidant people, therefore, should be particularly bothered by—and their working models should be activated in—situations that involve giving or receiving support, being emotionally intimate, or having to express personal emotions. These types of situations, in other words, should elicit the prototypical emotional, cognitive, and behavioral features that are the hallmarks of avoidant attachment.

Highly secure individuals have received good, consistent, and predictable care from past attachment figures, especially when they were upset (Bowlby, 1973). During adulthood, therefore, secure individuals do not worry about relationship loss or their partners wanting to become emotionally closer to them. To the contrary, secure people want to develop greater closeness and intimacy with their partners (Mikulincer, 1998), which is facilitated by their use of constructive, problem-focused coping strategies. When most chronic or acute stressors are encountered, the benevolent working models of secure people should become activated (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007b). Unlike their insecure counterparts, secure people should turn to their attachment figures openly and directly in order to solve their problems, quell their negative emotions, and move forward with their plans and goals.

During the past two decades, several studies have documented theoretically meaningful attachment style by situation effects (for reviews, see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007a; chapter 19, this volume). Some of the most programmatic work on this topic has been conducted by Simpson, Rholes, and their colleagues, who have spent 20 years testing attachment diathesis-stress effects in situations that, according to attachment theory, activate the working models of secure, anxious, or avoidant people.

This body of work has focused on the unique role that different sources of stress assume in eliciting the quintessential features—the relational signatures—of attachment security, anxiety, and avoidance.

The first study in this program of research explored how adult romantic attachment styles moderate support-giving and support-seeking in romantic couples when one partner is waiting to...
engage in an “anxiety-provoking” task. Simpson, Rholes, and Nelligan (1992) unobtrusively videotaped dating couples while the female partner was waiting to do an activity that, she was told, made most people feel anxious. While she waited to do the stressful task (which never occurred), her male partner waited with her, believing that he was going to do a different, nonstressful activity. After the study, observers rated how distressed and how much support each female partner sought and how much support her male partner offered. Securely and avoidantly attached partners differed considerably in the amount of support they sought or gave, depending on how distressed the female partner was during the waiting period. If women were less distressed, they sought less support from their male partners, regardless of their attachment styles. If, however, women were more securely attached, they sought more support if they were more distressed, but less support if they were less distressed. Conversely, avoidant women sought less support if they were more distressed and more support if they were less distressed. Securely attached men provided more support if their partners were more distressed (regardless of the woman’s attachment style), whereas avoidant men offered less support, especially when their partners were more distressed. Similar effects have been documented when the support-giving and support-receiving roles are reversed (i.e., when men wait to do a stressful task with their nonstressed female partners; Simpson, Rholes, Oriña, & Grich, 2002). Thus, corroborating specific person-by-situation predictions derived from attachment theory, highly avoidant people are not poorer support-seekers and support-providers in general; rather, they are deficient only when they or their partners are upset and support-seeking of giving is clearly required. Similarly, highly secure people do not always seek or provide greater support; they do so primarily when they or their partners are distressed and direct emotional support truly needs to be sought or provided.

The second study in this line of research examined how relationship-based sources of stress affect the display of different conflict resolution tactics, depending on each partner’s attachment style. Simpson, Rholes, and Phillips (1996) randomly assigned dating couples to discuss either a major or a minor unresolved problem in their relationship. Each couple was then videotaped as the partners tried to resolve the problem as best they could. The discussions were then coded by observers. Consistent with attachment theory, more anxiously attached individuals reacted less positively toward their partners, but only when they were trying to resolve a major problem that posed a more serious threat to their relationship. For example, highly anxious individuals who discussed a major problem displayed greater distress and more discomfort during their discussions, and they reported feeling more anger and hostility toward their partners. At the end of their discussions, they perceived their partners and relationships less positively in terms of the amount of love, commitment, mutual respect, openness, and supportiveness in the relationship. Highly anxious women who discussed a major problem had discussions that were rated as lower in quality. Thus, consistent with specific person-by-situation predictions gleaned from attachment theory, highly anxious people do not think, feel, or behave in a less functional manner in all conflict situations; they do so mainly in stressful situations that call into question the permanence, stability, or quality of their close relationships. Less anxious (i.e., more secure) individuals, by comparison, respond in a more functional manner, particularly when dealing with major relationship conflicts.

We have also investigated how attachment to one’s parents (measured by the Adult Attachment Interview; AAI) is related to the types of caregiving that “work best” in calming secure, anxious, and avoidant people when they are upset. Simpson, Winterheld, Rholes, and Oriña (2007) had both partners in romantic relationships complete the AAI. One week later, each couple was videotaped trying to resolve the most important current problem in their relationship. After the study, observers rated each discussion for the degree to which: (1) emotional, instrumental, and physical caregiving behaviors were displayed; (2) care recipients appeared calmed by their partner’s caregiving attempts; and (3) each partner appeared distressed during the discussion. Individuals who had more secure representations of their parents were rated as more calmed if their partners gave them emotional care, especially if they were distressed during the discussion. Conversely, individuals who had more avoidant representations of their parents were more calmed by instrumental caregiving behaviors from their partners, especially if they were distressed. Thus, as anticipated by attachment theory, securely attached people benefit more from emotional forms of support (which they most likely received earlier in life), but chiefly when they are distressed. Avoidant people, in contrast, benefit more from instrumental support (which they probably received...
to some degree during childhood), but principally when they are upset. This indicates that avoidant people do benefit from certain forms of support, particularly those that may not threaten their sense of independence and autonomy. When secure and avoidant individuals are less distressed, however, they are both receptive to alternate forms of caregiving.

What are highly anxious people thinking and feeling in relationship-threatening situations that might explain why their relationships tend to be so turbulent and unstable? To address this question, Simpson, Ickes, and Grich (1999) had dating couples try to infer what their partners were thinking and feeling (from a videotape of their interaction) as both partners rated and discussed slides of attractive opposite-sex people who ostensibly were interested in meeting and dating new people on campus. This task was designed to be a relationship-threatening one, particularly for highly anxious people. In this relationship-threatening context, highly anxious individuals were better at inferring the relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings that their partners were actually having about the attractive opposite-sex stimulus persons during the rating and evaluation task. Highly anxious people, in other words, got more directly “into the heads” of their partners in this situation, showing signs of cognitive hyper-vigilance. Less anxious (more secure) persons, however, were less empathically accurate in this situation. If they were more empathically accurate, highly anxious individuals also perceived that their relationships were less stable and they felt more threatened and distressed during the rating and discussion task. They also reported sharp declines in feelings of closeness to their partners following the task. And highly anxious individuals who more accurately inferred their partner’s threatening thoughts and feelings were more likely to have broken up with their partners 4 months later. In sum, this study confirms that highly anxious people “get into the heads” of their partners and accurately infer the relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings that their partners are having precisely when they value the most—their relationships—could be in jeopardy. Highly anxious people are not more empathically accurate than other people in general; they are more accurate mainly in situations that threaten their relationships.

Most recently, we have investigated how people with different attachment styles remember their own behavior during attachment-relevant discussions with their romantic partners. Simpson, Rholes, and Winterheld (2010) had couples engage in two videotaped discussions of major, unresolved conflicts in their relationship. Immediately after the discussions, each partner reported how supportive and emotional distant s/he had been in the discussions. One week later, each partner returned to the lab and was asked to recall how supportive and emotionally distant s/he had been one week earlier. Highly avoidant individuals remembered being less supportive one week later, but only if they were distressed during the original discussions. Highly anxious individuals remembered being less emotionally distant, but only if they were distressed during the discussions. These memory biases are consistent with the cardinal needs and goals of highly avoidant and highly anxious people. Avoidant people want to limit intimacy and maintain control and autonomy in their relationships, so they remember themselves as being less supportive, particularly during difficult conversations with their partners. Anxious people, in contrast, desire greater felt security, so they remember themselves as being less emotionally distant (emotionally closer), particularly if their conversations were difficult.

Our program of research has also investigated how attachment styles are associated with reactions to chronically stressful life events. One such event is the transition to parenthood. Accordingly, we examined how the experience of having a first baby impacts the marital satisfaction of partners who have different attachment styles (Rholes, Simpson, Campbell, & Grich, 2001). Consistent with predictions, if highly anxious women enter the transition to parenthood perceiving less support from their husbands, they experience significant declines in marital satisfaction across the first 6–7 months of the transition. If, however, they enter parenthood perceiving greater spousal support, they do not report declines. Mediation analyses indicated that highly anxious women who enter the transition period perceiving less spousal support experience larger drops in perceived spousal support from the prenatal period to 6 months postpartum, which in turn predicts larger pre-to-postpartum declines in their marital satisfaction. Attachment avoidance was not related to marital changes, which is understandable given that avoidant people place less importance on the quality of their relationships.

Bowlby (1988) hypothesized that anxiously attached mothers who enter the transition to parenthood harboring doubts about the supportiveness of their partners should also experience postpartum increases in depressive symptoms. He reasoned that the perception of insufficient partner support should
be tied to deeper and more pervasive concerns about possible relationship loss, especially among highly anxious people. If, however, highly anxious mothers enter the transition feeling well supported by their partners, they should be buffered from experiencing depressive symptoms. Bowlby (1988) also conjectured that the connection between (1) higher anxiety in combination with more doubts about the partner’s supportiveness and (2) increased depression should be mediated by (3) the degree to which these new mothers perceive declines in partner support during the first few months postpartum. Simpson, Rholes, Campbell, Tran, and Wilson (2003) found each of these effects in anxiously attached first-time mothers.

Our program of work has also tested how people with different attachment styles respond to less taxing yet still stressful daily events in their relationships. Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, and Kashy (2005) had both partners in dating relationships complete daily diaries for 14 consecutive days. After the diary period, each couple was videotaped trying to resolve the most contentious unresolved problem that arose during the diary period. Highly anxious individuals perceived greater daily conflict in their relationships, significantly more than their partners did. They also reported that daily conflicts were more detrimental to the future of their relationships. Moreover, on days when they perceived greater relationship-based conflict, highly anxious individuals believed that their partners had a more negative outlook on their relationship and its future, a view that typically was not shared by their partners. When partners discussed the most serious conflict in the lab after the diary phase, highly anxious individuals both reported and were rated as being more distressed, regardless of how positively their partners behaved toward them (rated by observers) during their discussion. Less anxious (more secure) individuals exhibited the opposite pattern of effects in both the diary and the lab portions of this study.

Viewed in its entirety, this long-standing program of research has documented that certain types of stressful situations have powerful and unique effects on people who have different attachment styles. Our work has examined the way in which relationship partners think, feel, and behave in a variety of situations, including lab-based conflict and support interactions, lab-based relationship-threatening discussions, major life transitions, and everyday life stressors. Across these different social contexts, avoidant people are not always unsupportive, withdrawn, or uncooperative with their relationship partners; rather, these defining features of avoidance are elicited by certain types of stressful situations (e.g., feeling pressure to give or receive support, to become more intimate, to share deep emotions). Likewise, anxious people are not always clingy, demanding, or prone to engaging in dysfunctional conflict resolution tactics; instead, the cardinal features of anxiety are evoked by certain types of stressful situations (e.g., those that pose a threat to the stability or quality of their relationships). And secure people are not always supportive, nondepressed, or inclined to display functional conflict resolution tactics; the defining features of security are witnessed primarily in stressful situations that activate their positive working models and constructive interpersonal tendencies.

Future Directions

In this chapter, we have highlighted how and why the adoption of a person-by-situation or “interactionist” approach to the study of relationships can yield novel and deeper insights into important relationship dynamics, above and beyond what can be provided by adopting an exclusively trait or an exclusively situational approach. Although several interactionist programs of research currently exist within the relationships field, person-by-situation perspectives are by no means the norm. In fact, there are several prominent domains of theory and research with both personality and social psychology that could benefit from the application of interactionist frameworks. Some long-standing lines of research might be enriched and expanded by infusing what we know about certain individual differences into extant social psychological theories and models. Other significant lines of research could be extended and refined by incorporating the functional meaning of different types of situations into personality-based theories and models.

With respect to how individual differences might inform major social psychological theories and models, let’s return to interdependence theory. This comprehensive theory, which focuses on how relationship partners make decisions about what to do given the payoffs associated with doing different activities with or without the partner, has not systematically examined whether and how people who score high versus low on certain trait-like measures (e.g., self-esteem, neuroticism, attachment insecurity) perceive and respond to certain types of situations differently (see Kelley et al., 2003). For example, when deciding what to do in situations that could reveal whether the current partner really...
can or cannot be trusted, individuals who are insecurely attached or have low self-esteem should perceive and react quite differently than their securely attached or high self-esteem counterparts. Anxiously attached people, for example, may regularly enter or create situations that allow them to test whether their partners can truly be trusted (Simpson, 2007), whereas avoidantly attached people may circumvent trust-diagnostic situations whenever possible (cf. Beck & Clark, 2009). Some of the apparent “error” in prior interdependence studies, therefore, could be variance that is meaningfully associated with a person’s standing on a “situationally relevant” trait measure.

While individual difference approaches can inform social psychological theories and models, a focus on situational influences can also inform theories and research that have used primarily personality-based processes to explain behavior and outcomes in relationship contexts. In the social support literature, for example, much empirical work has been based on the assumption that perceived support is associated with certain personality characteristics and that support experiences are, at least in part, due to biased construal processes (e.g., Sarason, Sarason, & Shearin, 1986). Support recipients, however, are embedded in relationships in which they affect and are affected by their partners, many of whom serve as their primary source of support. Hence, casting a wider “situational net” may generate a better understanding of the extent to which social support is likely to be effective and to generate beneficial (or detrimental) intra- and interpersonal outcomes. Such outcomes should not only depend on the personality characteristics of the support recipient, but also on those of the support provider (i.e., his/her motivation, skills, and abilities to provide effective support), the individuals’ relationship history, and how these factors relate to and interact with each other in specific support-relevant situations.

Whereas studies that have considered multiple influences on social support processes in ongoing relationships are still sparse, researchers have begun to recognize the need for a more integrative perspective. Lakey and colleagues (1996), for example, found that support perceptions are significantly influenced by (1) biases of the support recipient, (2) personality characteristics of the support provider, and (3) their statistical interactions. Indeed, recipient-by-provider interactions were the most important determinants of support perceptions across three studies conducted in different social contexts.

Furthermore, Cutrona et al. (1997) demonstrated that the personality characteristics (extraversion and neuroticism) of both the support recipient and his/her spouse in conjunction with the immediate relationship context (relationship mood and history of support exchanges) affect the support perceptions and behaviors of both partners. More recently, lida, Seidman, Shrout, Fujita, and Bolger (2008) have shown how characteristics of the support recipient (e.g., his/her level of support seeking), the provider (e.g., his/her mood), their relationship (e.g., relationship anxiety, satisfaction), and the stressor (e.g., severity of the stressor) all combine to predict support provision in dating couples.

Following the footsteps of Kurt Lewin, we began this chapter by proposing that, to fully understand how and why people think, feel, and behave as they do, one must know something about their core dispositions, the specific social situations they are facing, and how these variables may combine (statistically interact). As the theories, models, and research reviewed in this chapter reveal, we have come a long way on the path toward understanding how certain people interact with certain situations to predict unique facets of social behavior. Currently, however, we have a much better understanding of the principle traits and dispositions that characterize people than we do of the fundamental situations that impact people on a regular basis. Although inroads have been made toward developing taxonomies of the major situations that affect people as they communicate with others in different social contexts (e.g., Kelley et al., 2003), further attention and effort should be devoted to developing, refining, and testing additional situational taxonomies, including how certain situations elicit the defining features of people who possess certain dispositions.

One logical starting point is the six situation dimensions along which Kelley et al.’s (2003) 20 social situations vary (see Table 20.1).

Another pivotal direction for future research is the incorporation of person-by-situation models into broader theoretical frameworks. One such overarching framework is the functionalist strategy for understanding additional points of connection between personality and social behavior. According to the functionalist strategy (Snyder & Cantor, 1998), global/enduring and specific/time-limited features of people (e.g., their traits) and the major situational factors that impact people should jointly affect the “agendas” that people formulate and pursue as they live their lives. The specific agendas that people develop from the functional goals they
have are then translated into “action plans” intended to achieve important life outcomes. Most agendas fall within four domains: (1) individual-level agendas (e.g., clarifying one's social identity, working on important personal projects), (2) interpersonal-level agendas (e.g., getting along with others, influencing them in specific ways in certain interactions), (3) relationship-level agendas (e.g., developing and maintaining comfortable and fulfilling intimacy and felt security with close partners), and (4) group-level agendas (e.g., working with certain groups or organizations to promote valued social causes).

Snyder and Cantor (1998) have suggested that interpersonal relationships should be an excellent domain within which to test functional models. Indeed, many of the most fundamental needs that people have directly involve other people. The need to establish and maintain some degree of social connectedness with others is a case in point. However, the amount of social connectedness that a person seeks and maintains ought to depend on his or her specific dispositions in relation to the major life situations with which s/he is currently dealing. For example, highly avoidant individuals who live in a communal versus an individualistic culture should develop different plans and agendas for achieving and sustaining sufficient social connectedness, given the norms and expectations of the culture in which they live. Highly avoidant individuals who live in collectivistic cultures, for instance, may desire, accept, or permit greater social connectedness with others than highly avoidant persons who live in individualistic cultures (Friedman, Rholes, Simpson, Bond, Diaz-Loving, & Chan, 2010). This, in turn, should affect the agendas they develop and pursue at the personal, interpersonal, relationship, and group levels, each of which should be tied to important life outcomes at each level.

One of the most interesting features of the functional strategy is potential intersections and “mismatches” between agendas that exist at different levels (e.g., individual vs. relationship, relationship vs. group). Mismatches of motivational agendas can occur within individuals and/or between partners, affecting the well-being of one or both partners and the overall functioning of their relationship. A person who is highly avoidant, for instance, is likely to have the proximal goal of maintaining independence, autonomy, and control in his/her current relationship. This preference, however, does not negate the fact that s/he may also have the more distal need/goal of remaining socially connected to other people. To carry out and ultimately reconcile these potentially competing agendas, highly avoidant people may deliberately choose to enter and avoid certain social situations.

Beck and Clark (2009) have, in fact, shown that more avoidant individuals prefer to enter social situations that do not provide clear feedback about the degree to which others like or dislike them (i.e., nondiagnostic social situations), and they deliberately avert social situations that could provide clear feedback. In so doing, highly avoidant people protect themselves from possible rejection and pain, but they also miss out on forming closer, more emotionally connected, and more trusting relationships. If such persons enter an intimate relationship and continue to avoid socially diagnostic situations with their partners, they may also deprive themselves of positive feedback regarding their partner's true amount of affection and commitment for them. Without such knowledge, highly avoidant people may find it more difficult to risk themselves and to become more dependent on and responsive to their partners (Simpson, 2007). Accordingly, their primary individual-level agenda—to maintain sufficient autonomy and independence—should affect the dynamics of their relationship, including their interpersonal-level agenda—to maintain sufficient social connections with others. The ultimate fate of their relationship may therefore depend on their partner's motivational agenda. If there is a good match of agendas between the two partners, each partner may feel satisfied with the relationship, given that each partner can be a “situational audience” for the other (e.g., finding ways for the highly avoidant partner to maintain a sense of control and independence while still enjoying the company of mutual friends). If, however, there is a glaring mismatch (e.g., the partner of the highly avoidant person demands more closeness and intimacy), unsatisfactory outcomes are likely to follow and the relationship could quickly become unstable.

Motivational agendas might also be systematically related to different combinations of personality traits or characteristics within a person, resulting in the transformation of agendas at different levels. For example, at the individual level, highly avoidant people should want to limit emotional intimacy and remain independent to avert pain associated with prior rejections. If, however, they are also highly extraverted, they should be more inclined to enter different types of social situations. Although their avoidance should motivate them to prefer nondiagnostic social situations, their extraversion may lead them to enter some socially diagnostic situations,
which might expose them to positive feedback about
the self from others. This, in turn, may disconfirm
their negative expectations about the responsiveness
of others, thereby weakening their individual-level
agenda of maintaining independence and trans-
forming their interpersonal-level agenda so they
become more receptive to entering mutually inter-
dependent relationships, especially with partners
who allow them to maintain a comfortable amount
of independence.

When we consider personality traits in a dyadic
context, personality should affect not only the con-
sistency of an individual’s behavioral responses in
certain situations (as specified by interactionist
approaches), but also the consistency of behaviors,
thoughts, and emotions displayed in response to
and elicited from relationship partners. According
to this perspective, an individual’s behavior is deter-
mined by actor effects (i.e., individual differences in
a person’s responses that are consistent across inter-
actions with multiple partners), partner effects (i.e.,
individual differences in the responses a person elici-
ts from others, which in turn affect the individual),
and relationship effects (i.e., unique responses that
are specific to a given person and partner; Malloy &
Kenny, 1986). These distinctions may have impor-
tant implications for whether and how personality
changes or remains stable over time. Individuals
may, for instance, repeatedly enter relationships
with partners who reinforce their core dispositional
characteristics. A person with low self-esteem, for
instance, may constantly form relationships with
new partners who are dominant or controlling,
simply reinforcing their feelings of worthlessness.
However, such individuals might on occasion
choose partners who do not have these tendencies,
thereby halting the reinforcement of their own core
dispositional tendencies.

With respect to long-term relationship function-
ing, the best outcomes are likely to occur when part-
ners’ agendas at each of the four levels are consistent
and mesh well with each other. More specifically, to
the extent that each partner’s individual, interaction,
relationship, and group agendas tend to be compat-
bile and can be coordinated to achieve goals, the
successful completion of one individual’s agendas
should facilitate his/her partner’s agendas. These are
just some of the numerous directions in which the
functional strategy might be profitably extended.

In closing, social and personality psychology
truly have begun to merge since Lewin first pro-
posed that what individuals think, feel, and do
depends on both who they are and the specific life
situations they are confronting. We still must gain a
deeper understanding of what the principle dimen-
sions of interpersonal situations are and the condi-
tions under which they trigger the working models
that characterize different personality traits. This is
perhaps the central mission of the next generation
of research on personality and social behavior.

References

Adorno, T. W., Farmel-Brunswik, E., Levinson, D. J., & Sanford,

Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange


Allport, G. W. (1968). The historical background of modern
social psychology. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.),
Handbook of social psychology (2nd ed., pp. 1–80). Reading,
MA: Addison-Wesley.

interpersonal social-cognitive theory. Psychological Review,
109, 619–645.

Tactical differences in coping with rejection sensitivity: The
role of prevention pride. Journal of Personality and Social

then” contingencies of interpersonal acceptance. Journal of
Personality and Social Psychology, 71, 1130–1141.

New York: Plenum.

avoid diagnostic social situations. Psychological Science, 20,
1175–1181.

dience experiment: The role of personality, situations, and their
interactions. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60,
398–413.

traits and processes: Framework, method, analysis, results. In
Y. Shoda, D. Cervone, & G. Downey (Eds.), Persons in con-
text: Building a science of the individual (pp. 201–210). New
York: Guilford.

York: Basic Books.


Basic Books.


surement of adult attachment: An integrative overview. In J.
A. Simpson & W. S. Rhodes (Eds.), Attachment theory and
close relationships (pp. 46–70). New York: Guilford Press.

Linking self-representations to prosocial behavior. Journal of
Personality and Social Psychology, 60, 368–375.

Buss, D. M. (1984). Toward a psychology of person-environ-
ment (PE) correlation: The role of spousal selection. Journal


Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007b). Boosting attachment security to promote mental health, pro-social values, and inter-group tolerance. Psychological Inquiry, 18, 139–165.


